the weekly
Standard

MARCH 25, 1996 $2.95

REMEMBER NICARAGUA?

BY ROBERT KAGAN

What I Learned By Running for President

LAMAR ALEXANDER

Running Down Reagan's Navy

MARK HELPRIN

T.S. Eliot and Princess Di's Lawyer

FREDERIC RAPHAEL

Two White Houses— George Bush's and Bill Clinton's

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The Sudden Delicacy of the Washington Press Corps

Last month, the son of a senior Clinton administration official was suspended from one of Washington's toniest private high schools after teachers caught the boy and a few of his friends drinking vodka and smoking dope at a school dance. Despite efforts to keep the embarrassing event secret, it didn't take long for just about every major news outlet in town to find out—including the city's two daily newspapers and at least one national newsweekly.

Yet nobody ran the story. The boy's well-known father, it turns out, had called various editors and asked them to keep his son's name out of print. Which may account for the curious silence on the matter. Or perhaps the press decided in this case to exhibit a little restraint, maybe even some manners and consideration for the private lives of others. Either way, let's hope the next time the child of a prominent Republican finds himself in the dean's office, reporters remember the new precedent they've set.

The same principle holds with any conceivable Republican scandal in the next administration, considering the extraordinary way the press is covering the Whitewater hijinks on Capitol Hill.

Did you know that Democratic senators are filibustering Republican efforts to continue investigating Whitewater? You may not, because this obstructionism is going mostly unremarked in the press. Can you doubt that if Republicans ever attempted to block an investigation into a Republican White House it would be front-page news daily until they relented? The mainstream media seem to have conjured up a nifty defense for themselves: *Nobody's interested in Whitewater, so we're not covering it. What's more, there's nothing there.*

This magazine is hardly a fan of senatorial inquisitions, but we have to say that the behavior of the White House in the past few months—with all those documents under subpoena suddenly popping up in boxes, on desks, in other offices—is an object lesson in why congressional oversight exists in the first place.

In the past 20 years we have come to expect press oversight as well, but if a new standard is being set, the press should apply it fairly in the next few years, or there will be yet another outbreak of that talk about "liberal media bias" they hate so much.

Carville Acts Up

The James Carville stories just keep flowing in. Carville was invited to debate Robert Novak at a *Forbes* magazine get-together for its advertisers. Carville, having taken advantage of the liquid refreshments at dinner, got crude fast in the ensuing debate. He capped it off by joking that since he'd married a Republican he'd "been celibate since 1994." (Actually, he and Mary Matalin have a new baby.) The audience was growing embarrassed for him, and finally a man shouted out, "Knock it off." Carville leered at the man and his wife: "Why? Are you married to a Republican too?" He then went off into an impossible-to-follow disquisition on incest and Louisiana. When you spend $25,000 or so for a Carville speech, you get the spice.

Let's You and Him Fight

The favorite of the Clinton White House in the Republican presidential race was not Pat Buchanan, despite the harm he's done Bob Dole. Nope, they believe Steve Forbes had a much bigger and more deleterious impact on the race.

How so? Well, Forbes froze out any other alternative to Dole such as Lamar Alexander by siphoning off votes. The Clinton camp loved this. And they were delighted with those Forbes ads trashing Dole. "Forbes hurt him," says a Clinton aide. Also, Forbes managed to take the flat tax off the table for the fall campaign. Clintonites feared it might click, but Forbes's advocacy of it led to sharp attacks and sinking popularity for the flat tax. Now, Dole has run away from it.

Boola Boola, We Want Moola

When graduate students at Yale University went on "strike" at the beginning of the year, all manner of delicious comedy was sure to result. We have not been disappointed.

At Yale, 95 percent of graduate students receive free tuition and nearly $10,000 a year for teaching one course

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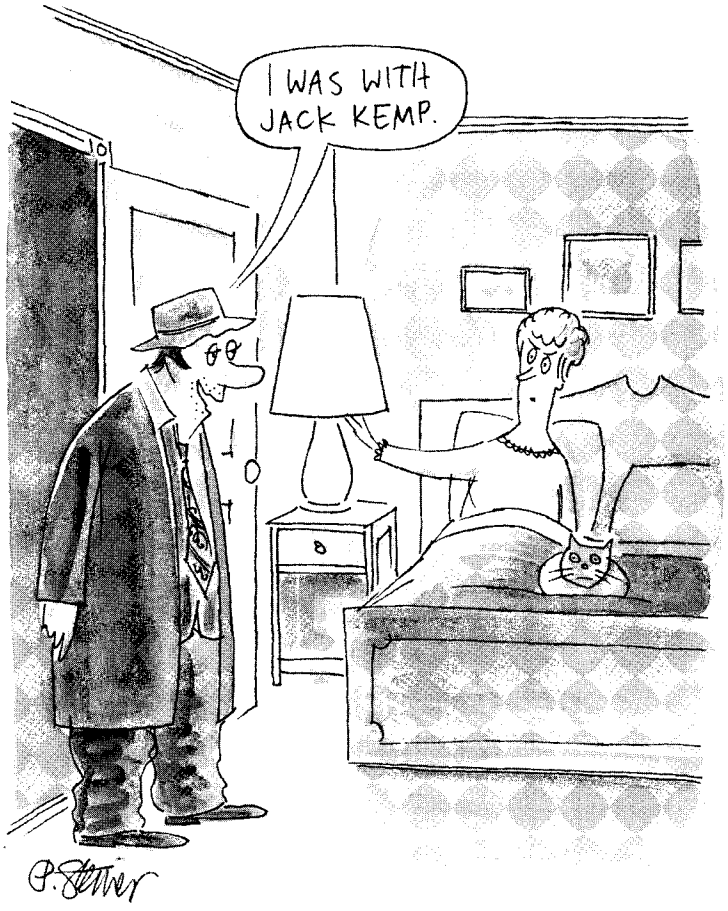

per semester. Deciding they could no longer tolerate such oppression, some of the grad students unionized (with the dining workers' union) and struck. Dozens of teaching assistants even withheld their students' grades for a time. Showing unexpected spine, the faculty and administration resisted, and the strike petered out.

But not before the Modern Language Association could get in on the act. At its annual convention, shortly following the strike, the MLA voted overwhelmingly to support the strike and condemn the administration. Its resolution describing the strike and the students' intolerable working conditions was classic MLA: outraged, self-righteous, and inaccurate in every particular.

So far, so normal, say veteran MLA-watchers, who long ago stopped expecting intellectual seriousness from the organization. But some of Yale's faculty have declared themselves "appalled." In fiery letters to MLA directors, they call the resolution "groundless" and "pointlessly damaging." That's a neat description of almost everything that comes out of the MLA. Glad to see the folks at Yale are finally catching on.

The Reading List

The Reading List wishes this week to share with you what is surely the book review of the year. It comes from *Publisher's Weekly*, the bible of the industry, whose short reviews are usually the first a book receives. This is for a tome entitled *First Comes Love*, by Marion Winik, in bookstores next month:

"National Public Radio commentator Winik's memoir will appeal primarily to romantics who believe in the primacy of love and who can empathize with a woman whose husband in a rocky marriage committed suicide. More realistic types will wonder why Winik, although a heavy drug user at the time, allowed herself to be courted by a flamboyant homosexual junkie; she was subsequently to learn that he had been HIV-positive for two or three years before they met. They married in 1986 in Manhattan. Tony Heubach, a former ice-dancer, was a considerate person, although after the couple had two sons, his interest in heterosexual relations waned and the marriage began to unravel. His drug use increased sharply and, as his HIV turned into AIDS, his addiction became alarming: periods of catatonia alternated with prolonged sessions of weeping and, on a few occasions, assaults on his wife. With pain so acute and constant that even morphine was minimally effective, he requested her help to end his life. She prepared the bowl of strawberry-banana yogurt with 60 capsules of Nembutal that killed him in 1994."

Hoo boy! There's a story we can *all* relate to. Usually, marriages between heavy drug users, one of whom is a flamboyant homosexual, that lead to assisted suicide come under the heading, "I'm so ashamed I could crawl into a hole and die." Not Marion Winik's, though; she obviously felt the need to ensure that her two sons get teased regularly as they journey through grade school and high school.

But the blurb does put us in mind of remarkable works by people who spent some considerable time in, shall we say, altered states of consciousness:

Kubla Khan, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The greatest opium dream ever put to paper. "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan his stately pleasure dome decree. . . ."

The Interpretation of Dreams, by Sigmund Freud. Maybe it took a one-time cocaine addict to see the logic in the dream state. Then again, maybe he was wrong.

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Casual

Not Just in the Summer, When It Sizzles

It snowed for the first time in three years in Paris, and it was freezing cold, to boot. But how glad I was to come out of the Musée d'Orsay at 9 o'clock on a Thursday night, into a full roaring blizzard on the Quai Anatole France. On the Seine, barges were combing their searchlights through the snow, and the long south wall of the Louvre had a gauze-like glow across the river. Hundreds of thousands of Americans this century have sat at a table in front of the Closerie des Lilas and pretended to be Ernest Hemingway. But few can have seen the Seine running milk-white through a pitch-black city in the middle of a winter storm.

So I had a novel tourist experience in Paris, and don't think that's easy. It was Mary McCarthy who first fessed up that tourism was the central modern fact of Europe's great cities—that "the authentic Venetian experience," "the Venice the natives know," was the Venice of the gum-wrapper-strewn plaza and the busload of drunk English hooligans. The same, of course, is true in spades of France, which receives twice as many foreign tourists per annum (60 million) as any other country in the world. (Spain is second with 30 million, the U.S. third with 25 million.)

Take the jerkwater town of Valençay. Who's seeing the real place—the summer tourist who knows a sunny, lively market town next to one of Europe's most elegant castles? Or my wife and I? We drove through on market day, a Tuesday. This wasn't market day for Julia Child. This was three or four battered old trucks parked in the town square, haphazardly, as if they'd skidded to a stop and set up where the whimsy struck them. It was nylon bibs and refrigerator magnets and black velvet paintings and questionable fish. The cafés were full of tired-looking women and dangerous-looking men.

The castle—bestowed on Talleyrand by Napoleon—was closed. In fact, it was abandoned. But you can tour the grounds for 8 francs. So we found ourselves in Talleyrand's front yard, with no one around for miles. We walked through the wrought-iron gates and were immediately surrounded by several dozen peacocks. A horseshoe-shaped hallway around the internal courtyard was filled with classical sculpture—but we were in the courtyard, not the hallway, and could only see the backs of the statues. That is, at eye level, an uninterrupted row of plump buttocks. Walking out onto the lawn, we became aware that there was a working bestiary (and has been for decades), with water buffalo, kangaroos, llamas, and reindeer running about beside and behind us.

Who would believe any of this stuff? To walk around Talleyrand's empty house in a town like a Guatemalan flea market, with no entertainment but a Boulevard of Rumps, and no company but peacocks, kangaroos, and llamas? This isn't tourism: It's some anorexic grad student telling her dreams to her shrink. And that can't be right, can it?

In fact, I begin to fear I've missed the "real France" and got it all wrong: For instance, if I were to use one word to describe the Parisians I met, it would be "nice." That was true especially of waiters in good restaurants. So as not to sound naive, let's assume it had something to do with the strong franc. For a foreigner to be in France now, he must really want to be there—because he likes the food, or admires the people, or whatever. And if you're nice to people, people are nice to you.

Meanwhile, the one word I'd use for the French pedestrians we pestered for directions would be "kind." I began to think that there's no such thing as the often-remarked French frostiness, only what sociologists call compassion fatigue. Most Frenchmen will gladly devote a half an hour a day to helping tourists read maps or find the Eiffel Tower. Unfortunately for them, in July and August they've generally met their quota by the time they arrive at the office in the morning.

One more area in which I probably shouldn't believe the evidence of my eyes: France does have non-smoking sections—but it doesn't have a national government that forbids restaurant owners from allowing their patrons, or airlines their passengers, or businessmen their employees, to smoke. Dogs are allowed on the subway; if that bothers you, you can—shocking thought—move to a seat across the aisle. The French also have this madcap idea that parents can somehow control what their children watch on television without creating a federal regulatory apparatus and mandating the rewiring of every television set in the country. I'm even inclined to say the one word I'd use in comparing French society to American would be "freer." But that can't be right, can it?

Maybe only in the off-season.

Christopher Caldwell

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Limón Dance Company in Phyllis Lamhut's *Cleave* © Photo: Tom Caravaglia

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In Defense of the Paleoconservatives

David Brooks claims that Patrick Buchanan and his paleoconservative allies are "at war with conservatism as we have properly come to understand it today" ("Buchananism: An Intellectual Cause," Mar. 11). Brooks argues that because Buchanan agrees with Aristotle rather than Gloria Steinem about the nature of men and women, and because he agrees with Edmund Burke against Abraham Lincoln that a nation cannot be founded on philosophical principles apart from tradition and culture, Buchanan and paleoconservatism are opposed to conservatism, properly understood.

I was under the impression that most conservatives would be familiar with Edmund Burke's critique of the French Revolution and his defenses of tradition and prejudice. I was therefore quite surprised to find the following litmus test: Someone is a proper conservative if he believes that "anyone can become an American by adopting certain ideas."

This litmus test is silly for several reasons. First of all, it means that not only are Alexander Hamilton, John Calhoun, and Russell Kirk not conservatives, but that to conservatives they are not even Americans since they do not pledge allegiance to the Gettysburg Address. Second, it means that Rousseau and Robespierre are Americans, if not conservatives, since they accept "the idea of a nation formed in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Buchanan and his paleoconservative allies represent a conservatism that is broader and more intellectually cogent than self-styled pundits like Brooks seem to appreciate. Because it is complex and anti-rationalistic, it is particularly vulnerable to caricature by liberals. When erstwhile conservatives engage in slander and innuendo, once the sole province of the academic Left, they do a disservice to themselves and to conservatism.

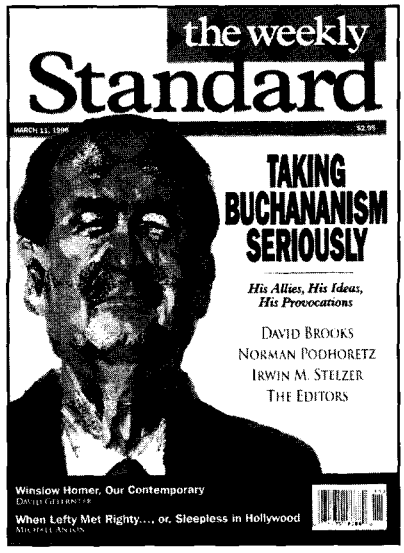
Daniel P. Moloney
South Bend, IN

David Brooks provided a thought-provoking tour of the thinking of Messrs Buchanan, Fleming, and Francis. I especially loved the quotation from Eugene Genovese's *The Southern Tradition* on Reagan as a progressive.

But please elaborate on how "deracinate" relates to race or racism. Uproot, as in annihilate or destroy, had been my sense of the word, confirmed when I hauled out my *Oxford English Dictionary*. Perhaps I can cut my roots to an extended family or a southern community—move to New York, as my Virginia grandparents did—but how can I un-race myself?

It could be that removing or uprooting community and culture in a personal sense, rather than a racial sense, defines "deracinate."

Ted Lindsay
Westport, CT



Divided over Buchanan

No doubt you will be attacked for Norman Podhoretz's splendid exposé of Pat Buchanan's anti-Semitism ("Anti-Semitism and a Presidential Candidacy," Mar. 11).

You have spoken with the same candor as the London Economist (Mar. 2), which found a pattern of anti-Semitism in Buchanan statements over two decades. "Taken separately, such remarks may be ignored. Taken together, they are fairly compelling evidence of prejudice."

Thomas Sowell deplored Buchanan's "divisive candidacy and questionable rhetoric and associates [which] may succeed in reelecting someone who both represents and epitomizes the counterculture, Bill Clinton."

Buchanan has had many opportunities—most recently on *Meet the Press*—to speak out about the racism accusations against him. He has shamefully ignored those opportunities. Let's look at Buchanan's regrettable silence this way: If an authoritative Republican-party voice were to say publicly that no matter how much Buchanan says he's against abortion, he is secretly pro-choice, Buchanan wouldn't wait a second to deny indignantly that he was pro-choice. If an authoritative Republican-party voice were to say that Buchanan is secretly for unrestricted immigration, he would deny it a hundredfold. But faced with accusations about racism and anti-Semitism the best he can do is to laugh them off.

And that's why Bill Clinton is on his knees every night praying for a miracle—a Buchanan victory in San Diego, if only a platform victory.

Arnold Beichman
Stanford, CA

While Norman Podhoretz employs Patrick Buchanan's more recent statements to illustrate his anti-Semitism as concisely and effectively as I've ever seen, his admission that he'd previously "held his tongue" in deference to Buchanan's Cold Warrior credentials is too typical of the sort of gymnastics that neocons (including Jewish neocons) engage in to ignore and minimize anti-Semitism on the right, while being ever vigilant for the faintest whiff of that old prejudice from the left. Now, if only the scales could fall from Podhoretz's eyes where Buchanan's fellow travelers Pat Robertson and Richard Nixon are concerned!

Jeffrey Sacks
Washington, DC

With all due respect, Norman Podhoretz is wrong about Patrick Buchanan. Buchanan is not an anti-Semite, and the evidence offered to the contrary is libelously weak.

To criticize Israel and the pro-Israeli lobby is not anti-Semitic. If Buchanan had said in 1990, "I'm against entering the war, against Israel's support for it, AIPAC's support for it," no one would have called him an anti-Semite. But his use of colorful language—"Israel and its

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amen corner"—qualifies him as an anti-Semite.

If Buchanan criticized by name Irish politicians—Ted and Joe Kennedy, Governor Casey, Bob Dornan, the late Tip O'Neill—for supporting the Irish government on an issue he believed detrimental to Anglo-American relations, would this qualify him as anti-Irish Catholic? The four strongest supporters of Israel in the press may be Jewish-Americans. To criticize the strong pro-Israeli position of Rosenthal, Kissinger, Krauthammer, and Perle is not anti-Semitism.

I have read almost all of Buchanan's articles and regularly watched him slug it out with Michael Kinsley on *Crossfire*. Your charges of bigotry don't square with reality. Politics gets dirty when the character assassins, stone throwers, and mud slingers get into the fray. Disagree with Buchanan, but please stop defaming a good, honorable, and decent man.

WILLIAM M. CONNOLLY
NEWTON, MA

RESPECTABLE ECONOMICS

Thank you for Irwin Stelzer's "Buchanan's Surprisingly Respectable Economics" (Mar. 11). It has been a mystery to me why fellow NAFTA supporters have so consistently displayed such a blithe disregard for free trade's losers, primarily low-wage workers.

I am not yet ready, however, to "reconsider" the role of the corporation in America when a much simpler remedy is at hand. Why don't we just stop taxing the hell out of both workers and their employers? Abolish the payroll tax. I suspect the effects would more than counteract the occasional downsides of free trade.

MARGUERITE SNOW
STOCKTON, CA

DON'T WALL OFF AMERICA

Three cheers for your insightful editorial "Republicans and Immigration" (Feb. 26). It's worth noting that the most successful Republican politician of the past half-century, Ronald Reagan, won 41 states in 1980 running as a pro-immigration candidate, even in the middle of the worst economic recession since the Great Depression.

One of the primary themes of the Reagan victory was that the United States should stand as a "shining city on a hill." The Buchanan-Simpson-Smith vision of America seems to be that the shining city on a hill should be surrounded by a 20-foot barbed-wire fence protected by the military, with citizens carrying internal passports. I hope Republicans will reject that vision.

STEPHEN MOORE
WASHINGTON, DC

THE POLITICAL ISN'T PARTISAN

Eric Felten has repeated a common error in confusing the meaning of the term "nonpartisan" with "nonpolitical" in reference to the League of Women Voters ("Non-Partisanship as a Partisan Weapon," Mar. 4). As a nonpartisan organization, the League supports neither parties nor candidates. Felten, failing to discover any evidence of partisanship, tried to impose it on our political positions.

First, Felten refers to Republican claims made in 1995 that the California League was partisan. Two years earlier, however, when that League supported a redistricting plan put together by Republicans, the cries of partisanship were coming from Democrats.

Second, it was amusing to see the League's opposition to term limits cited in an article attempting to prove partisanship. Term limits is an issue on which we had support from members of both parties. As for Felten's claim that we opposed our own grassroots on this issue, the reverse is true. The pressure to oppose term limits came from our state Leagues.

In the 75 years that the League has been advocating political positions, observers have too often mistaken political action for partisanship.

BECKY CAIN
PRESIDENT, LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
WASHINGTON, DC

ERIC FELTEN RESPONDS: ***If the League's political action has consistently been "mistaken" for partisanship over its 75-year history, perhaps that ought to tell the League something.***

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Privatization—the key to welfare reform

All social programs were born originally out of good intentions to handle some obvious need. The invariable problem is abuse of the programs. Government's solution has been typical all-or-nothing regulation. Food stamps were intended to ensure nobody starved. But the system merely created a new form of quasicurrency, bought and sold on a growing black market. Typical government solution? Eliminate the program.

Privatizing feeds people *and* reduces corruption.

Reform of the food stamp program *can* be accomplished without forsaking the original intention. Instead of creating a quasicurrency redeemable for anything — including beer and cigarettes — let food manufacturers bid to provide the basic necessities. Bakers with the lowest bread bid issue bread coupons. The coupon has no face value; it's only good for a loaf of that baker's bread. The store would be able to redeem the coupon only with the distributor, ending the cash black market. Only the bakers need be audited, to ensure they delivered the bread for the coupons issued; the government would pay the bid amount.

Such a system eliminates fraud, black-market brokering, and encourages competition. Even more importantly, the recipients would be able to use the coupons only for specific products, ensuring healthy, nutritional foods for the family, a return to the original intention.

Free enterprise programs work in the real world.

Far too often government attempts wonderful social programs totally disregarding basic human nature: People will break the system. When corruption becomes too great, the truly needy are harmed by those who exploit the system for a quick profit.

The key to designing a good program, including taxation, is to ask, simply: "How could one circumvent this?" Government lives in a dream world where static models are employed because they argue nobody can forecast the future. But that static world assumes no change. In effect, government guarantees every program will fail in its goal. In the end a corrupt system merely brings down the house. The reciprocal is also true: The closer you get to free enterprise, the harder the circumvention and the stronger the program.

It is time reality wins over idealistic theory. If we cannot deal with corruption in an honest way, worthwhile intentions will be thwarted. That leaves us with only a system of death and taxes.

For more information on the Princeton Proposal for tax reform & economic growth, contact:

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the weekly Standard

EUTHANASIA HORROR

Until recently, the American "death with dignity" movement celebrated the Netherlands as a model for the humane treatment of the terminally ill and other such unfortunates. Holland is the only nation on earth that officially condones euthanasia. It does not punish doctors who accede to the "well-considered" requests of "suffering" patients for fatal drugs. But those who would liberalize or abandon criminal penalties against Kevorkian-style suicide in *this* country no longer talk much about the Dutch experience, because too much politically unpalatable news has been coming out of Holland. Involuntary euthanasia, it turns out, is a shocking commonplace there. More than 10,000 times in 1990 alone Dutch doctors acted deliberately to shorten the lives of their patients—in the majority of cases *without* those patients' assent.

FORGET "DEATH WITH DIGNITY"—WE ARE NOW ON THE SLIPPERY SLOPE TO KEVORKIANISM AS A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT.

That can't happen here, most American proponents of "rational suicide" insist. We certainly hope not, because the question is no longer purely speculative. On March 6, an 8-3 majority of the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals struck down that portion of a Washington state statute establishing felony punishment for anyone who "knowingly . . . aids another person to attempt suicide." The Constitution, the Ninth Circuit held, protects a "liberty interest" in "life-ending medication for use by terminally ill, competent adults who wish to hasten their own deaths," so long as they request and receive it from licensed doctors. These are circumstances essentially identical to the euthanasia guidelines enshrined in Dutch law.

An extraordinary opinion, to say the least. Over more than 100 pages, Judge Stephen Reinhardt mounts an exhaustive defense of this new constitutional "right to die." A long line of American privacy jurisprudence, he writes, has placed limits on a state's ability to intrude in any number of individual decisions: about marriage, procreation, child-rearing and education, intercourse and contraception, pregnancy, and abortion. These are all "highly personal and intimate" decisions "of great importance to the individual." And few decisions can be more personal, intimate, or important "than the decision to end one's life, especially when the reason for doing so is to avoid excessive and protracted pain."

Judge Reinhardt makes particular use of the Supreme Court's abortion decisions, beginning with *Roe* v. *Wade* and ending with the 1992 description (in *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey*) of abortion as a right "central to personal dignity and autonomy." He adds the hypothetical acknowledgment made in the 1990 *Cruzan* v. *Missouri* decision that constitutional protections would include the right to refuse life-sustaining medical treatment. And from all this, he infers a generalized "liberty interest" in "controlling the time and manner of one's death" with help from a physician.

Judge Reinhardt is mighty pleased with the cleverness of his opinion. "I think this may be my best ever," he tells the *Wall Street Journal*. But the judge misses the manifold irony of his own argument. How can a person's right to the death of his choosing heavily depend on Supreme Court abortion rulings—when those rulings deny that the rights they advance involve any *person's* death at all? The *Casey* decision permitted states to scale back some recently identified "rights" while protecting their bedrock precedent in *Roe*. So how can *Casey* sustain a major *expansion* of privacy rights in *violation* of the greatest precedent of them all—the precedent that says the right to life of any recognized citizen is *unalienable*, not to be surrendered or transferred in whole or part? Even to a doctor.

And how, for that matter, might the *Cruzan* decision support the new right to an artificially induced and quickened medical death? That particular case

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appears to grant an almost *opposite* right: to have the feeding tube removed from an otherwise fatally afflicted comatose patient. In other words, to *reject* artificial medical intrusions in favor of a *natural* death. Judge Reinhardt denies this distinction, as he must to secure his conclusion.

And here, it should be acknowledged, the Supreme Court may already have given up part of its power to overrule him. A constitutional right to one sort of suicide (however limited) may imply a constitutional right to any and all suicides, lest the Constitution dissolve into horribly obvious contradictions. If the high court acknowledges a right to reject life-saving food and water, Justice Scalia has already noted, then there must be some steady constitutional principle "whereby, although the state may insist that an individual come in out of the cold and eat food, it may not insist that he take medicine; and although it may pump his stomach empty of poison he has ingested, it may not fill his stomach with food he has failed to ingest."

There can be no such principle, of course, and Justice Scalia's steely logic suggests that the Constitution should remain entirely silent on the question of suicide. Quite apart from the Constitution, however, there does remain a serious bright line in *medical* tradition between palliative care that might carry a predictably increased risk of death and a procedure whose only purpose is death itself. It is a bright line involving the physician's *intent*. Once that line is breached—and Judge Reinhardt breaches it with something close to enthusiasm—then we are quickly pushed down a greased slope to medical nihilism.

NO THOUGHT OF CAUTION OR TRADITION WILL DETER A JUDGE DETERMINED TO BRING THE BENEFITS OF SUICIDE TO HIS COUNTRYMEN.

The Ninth Circuit decision allows doctors to write prescriptions designed primarily and directly to kill. On what clear basis can this new authority ever be limited? If a patient has a right to suicide with help from a physician, surely he has a right to *all* the help he might conceivably need. Judge Reinhardt himself concedes as much: that "the patient may be unable to self-administer the drugs and that administration by the physician . . . may be the only way the patient may be able to receive them." He is not bothered by this prospect. Medical "assistance" in suicide becomes active euthanasia.

And for whom? What does it mean to restrict access to euthanasia only to the "terminally ill" and those "competent" to make the necessary request? Terminal illness is an elastic designation; it encompasses diagnoses that often involve a life expectancy of five or ten years. "Competence" is an equally meaningless limitation. No doctor could "responsibly" agree to a patient's request for euthanasia unless that doctor believed the life involved no longer to be "worth it." But if a physician has the legal power to make such awesome judgments about "competent" patients, on what grounds could we deny him the same authority over "incompetent" ones? American courts already allow the termination of life support to patients who are neither terminally ill (paraplegics, for example) nor competent (the comatose). Judge Reinhardt declines to identify any difference in principle between such a halt to medical intervention and actual, deliberate euthanasia.

This way lies the "rational suicide" crowd's biggest public relations embarrassment, Jack Kevorkian—an insanely death-obsessed quack whose "prescription" for his "patients" is automobile exhaust, a substance with no known analgesic or other healing property. This way also lies the Netherlands, which having taken a Ninth Circuit-like plunge long ago, has now proved itself unable, in practice or in law, to restrain its doctors within that court's wished-for, tidy boundaries.

Judge Reinhardt, nothing if not confident in his own judicial omniscience about the matter of life's least knowable moment, dismisses all such concerns, most of them out of hand. "It should not be difficult for the state or the [medical] profession itself to establish rules and procedures" necessary to ensure that legalized euthanasia does not produce social or cultural harm. The Hippocratic Oath—whose *first* promise is "I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect"—he mocks outright. That oath also proscribes abortion, of course. But "the ethical integrity of the medical profession remained undiminished" once abortions were widely performed, he says. And fears that legalized abortion "would lead to its widespread use as a substitute for other forms of birth control . . . have, of course, not materialized." How's that again?

No worry grounded in caution or tradition is sufficient to deter a judge determined to bring the benefits of suicide to his countrymen, it appears. According to Judge Reinhardt, his colleagues on the bench "are certainly not obligated" to delay such a gift "in order to satisfy the moral or religious precepts of a portion of the population." There are American lives that are simply taking too much time to end, and time is of the essence. For a "terminally ill adult who ends his life in the final stages of an incurable and painful degenerative disease, the decision to commit suicide is not

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senseless, and death does not come too early." And where suicide is concerned, apparently, time is money. Reinhardt's court is "reluctant to say that . . . it is improper for competent, terminally ill adults to take the economic welfare of their families and loved ones into consideration."

In at least two cases in the past year, Dutch courts have upheld the immunity from punishment of doctors who openly acknowledge having killed, on request of the parents, babies born with disabilities. *Could* this happen here? In one critical respect—with the issuance of Judge Reinhardt's ghastly, appalling decision—it has already begun.

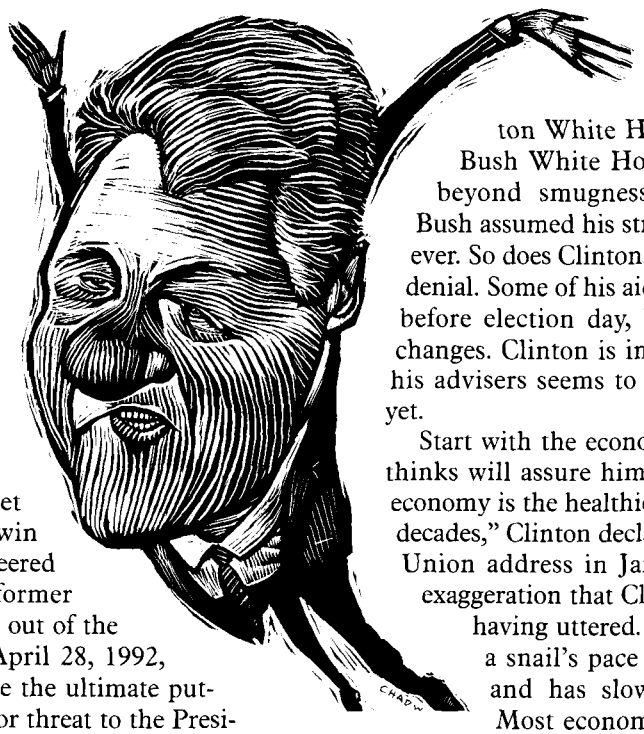
—David Tell, for the Editors

THE CLINTON-BUSH PARALLEL

by Fred Barnes

NOBODY HAS ENJOYED THE RAUCOUS Republican presidential race more than the folks at the Clinton White House. "It's hard for me to accept that something this entertaining is coming to a halt," says a senior White House aide, chuckling as he speaks. "I've had a ball." Another presidential adviser derides Senate majority leader Bob Dole as "message man." Dole, of course, has struggled in search of talking points as he's wrapped up the GOP nomination. What's great about the Republican primaries is all the exposure it gives to GOP candidates, the Clinton adviser insists. "More is better," he adds. The more exposure they get, the more President Clinton's chances of reelection improve.

There's a parallel here. It's not a perfect one, but it's close enough that Clinton and his strategists should be chilled by it. The parallel: The guys at the Bush White House ridiculed the Democratic presidential candidates, especially Clinton, in exactly the same way in 1992. Richard Darman, then budget director, led the Clinton-can't-win guffaws. Other Bush advisers sneered at Clinton's inability to drive former California governor Jerry Brown out of the race. Then, in a memo dated April 28, 1992, Bush pollster Fred Steeper wrote the ultimate put-down of Clinton. "Perot is a major threat to the President," he said. "Clinton is not."



Kevin Chadwick

The point of this comparison is simple: Just like Bush, Clinton has wound up with a White House that is dangerously smug about reelection. Now, smugness isn't always a precursor of defeat, but it often is. And there are other, telling similarities between the attitude of the Clinton camp and that of Bush's team in 1992. True, the circumstances Clinton finds himself in this year are different from Bush's situation in 1992 in important ways. Bush's approval rating, for example, was tumbling rapidly four years ago, while Clinton's has been crawling upward in recent months. Also, a recession had struck during Bush's term, and he was bound to get some blame for it on election day. Clinton has escaped a recession so far. And while Bush was a klutz at campaigning, Clinton is a dazzling campaigner. (It's governing that Clinton has trouble with.)

Still, in its approach to the election, the Clinton White House is more like the Bush White House than not. It goes beyond smugness. To his detriment, Bush assumed his strengths would last forever. So does Clinton. Bush was in a state of denial. Some of his aides discerned this well before election day, but too late to make changes. Clinton is in denial now. None of his advisers seems to have figured this out yet.

Start with the economy, the issue Clinton thinks will assure him a second term. "Our economy is the healthiest it has been in three decades," Clinton declared in his State of the Union address in January. This is a wild exaggeration that Clinton may soon regret having uttered. The economy grew at a snail's pace (1.5 percent) in 1995 and has slowed further in 1996. Most economic indicators are lagging, and a few economists are predicting a recession later this year. Nonetheless, Clinton sounded even more bullish March 8 when he spoke in Northridge, California. "Just think where we were four years ago," he said. "Our economy was drift-

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ing. Now we've had 8.4 million jobs created in three years and one month." Clinton may think this is extraordinary job creation, but it's less than average for economic expansions. Everything's better, Clinton went on, including auto sales, which in truth have begun declining. In short, Clinton is Bush-like in his blind optimism about the economy. Despite a recession followed by slow growth, Bush rebuffed advisers who wanted him to propose a program for stimulating the economy. "I don't think there's anything wrong with the situation that two points of growth wouldn't cure," he told an aide. Bush believed increased growth would arrive automatically, just as Clinton acts as if he has magically banished the business cycle.

BUSH BELIEVED GROWTH WOULD ARRIVE AUTOMATICALLY. CLINTON ACTS AS IF HE HAS MAGICALLY BANISHED THE BUSINESS CYCLE.

If the economy let him down, Bush believed his reputation as a foreign policy president would pull him through the election. Now, Clinton thinks foreign policy is his ace in the hole. White House minions relentlessly push the line that after a rocky start Clinton has mastered foreign relations. They point to Haiti, Bosnia, Russia, and Northern Ireland as Clinton successes. Not only have Clintonites bought the spin, so have some journalists. "A new Clinton is emerging, a foreign policy president," the *Economist* wrote last October. White House press secretary Mike McCurry argued recently that problems overseas "require patience, discipline, firmness and require very steady leadership . . . which is what the president has offered." Marlin Fitzwater couldn't have said it better. In fact, that's what he did say repeatedly as Bush meandered to defeat.

Then, there are all the resources that the White House has husbanded, while Dole has exhausted his. The same thing was true in 1992: The incumbent, Bush, amassed a war chest, but Clinton spent every penny to win the Democratic nomination. In the end, the advantage this supposedly gave Bush vanished. Despite the Bush precedent, Clinton aides boast of the planning they've done and the money they've saved by delaying the formal start of Clinton's reelection drive. They began strategizing earlier and raised the maximum amount of money faster than any incumbent president, and everything has worked out just as they predicted. "The rhythm of the cycle is what we thought," says Doug Sosnik, the White House political director. "We haven't deviated from the plan we set out a year ago."

There's a final similarity. The generals in Bush's campaign army fought bitterly among themselves for status, so much so that the announcement of Bush's reelection drive had to be postponed for two weeks until the title of each official could be negotiated. Now, Clinton and his lieutenants can't agree on a campaign manager. When the Bushies squabbled in 1992, it wasn't a good sign. It isn't now either. ♦

THE LOBBYIST FOR LIFE

by Matthew Rees

THE PROPOSED BAN ON "PARTIAL BIRTH" abortions—passed by the Senate in December and scheduled for a final House vote the week of March 25—is the work of one of Washington's least well-known but most influential lobbyists. Douglas Johnson, legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee, has had a guiding hand in pro-life strategy for over a decade. "You have to have him in the room," says family-values activist Gary Bauer, "whether you're trying to block the other side or move the ball down the field."

Johnson commands enormous respect on Capitol Hill. When congressional aides talk about him, they use words not usually ascribed to lobbyists—"honest," "thorough," "trustworthy," "scrupulous," and "composed." He also has an unrivaled knowledge of congressional voting records on abortion-related issues. Even a seasoned legislator like Bob Dole has consulted Johnson on parliamentary tactics. But what really sets him apart from the herd of workaday lobbyists is the passionate conviction he brings to his job. "We feel that to the extent any of our efforts prevent a small number of abortions, we have been successful," says Johnson. The father of four children, three of them adopted, he struggles to prevent his job from becoming all-consuming, but fellow activists and journalists know they can expect calls from him at all hours, any day of the week, to discuss abortion politics.

This devotion may finally be paying off, with pro-life Republicans controlling Congress. For most of his 15 years in Washington, the 45-year-old Johnson has

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Why Can't Catholicism Be Trendy?

It's stupid to fall for every passing fashion. But that's the story of liberal Catholicism since Vatican II. Remember the silly infatuation with the "secular city"? Who can forget the red-hot liberation theologians whose utopian dreams have turned to ash! The list of follies is long.

Now radical feminism is all the rage. And what are we getting? Rampant divorce. Wounded and neglected children. Abortion. Sexual confusion and gay lib. Attempts to rehabilitate fictional goddesses and reintroduce pagan priestesses. Mutilation of the English language. "Liberated" religious orders, which are now dying! And, not least, claims that Jesus committed the *sin of sexism* when He chose only males for His priesthood and that He was wrong when He taught us to call God our *Father*.

Of course, if Jesus committed an injustice in excluding women from the priesthood, then He could hardly be divine, and if He didn't have the authority to identify God as our Father, then He didn't come down from Heaven and wasn't a member of any Trinity. Bye-bye Christianity!

Liberal pick-and-choose Catholics are trendy types who crave the approval of the world and can't stand the thought of being Politically *In*correct. They're intellectual cowards — and imitators of the liberal *Protestants*, who long ago devised a smorgasbord religion in order to prove their "open-mindedness" and cozy up to the world. Very clever.

But what do liberal Protestants have to show for their efforts? *Dying churches!* Why? Because the result of liberal Protestantism has been, in the words of Flannery O'Connor, "to turn religion into poetry and therapy, to make truth vaguer and vaguer, to banish intellectual distinctions,...and gradually to come to believe that God has no power...cannot reveal himself to us...and that religion is our own sweet invention." So why bother to go to church anymore? Not so clever, after all! Trendy religion is not only counter-productive, it's just plain dumb.

Cardinal Newman said that "some authority there must be if there is a revelation given." Catholicism is a *revealed* religion, not a concocted one, and our Lord gave *authority* to St. Peter and his successor popes to guard that revelation from fads and delusions. The NEW OXFORD REVIEW, a Catholic monthly magazine with an international audience, is published in Berkeley — yes, *that* Berkeley — so we've seen fads and delusions galore. We know frauds when we see them. We stand with the Catholicism of the ages, the Magisterium, and the Pope. We articulate the full splendor of Catholic truth, and even help wimpy Catholics develop a backbone.

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been beating back congressional efforts to liberalize abortion laws and answering critics who label pro-lifers "extremists."

The low point came with the election of Bill Clinton. On his third day in office, he issued five executive directives sought by abortion supporters: lifting the ban on foreign aid to groups that promote abortion, ending the gag rule on abortion referrals by publicly funded family planning clinics, expediting entry of RU486 into the United States, making abortion available at U.S. military hospitals, and providing federal funds for research using fetal tissue from abortions. Before long, the administration was working with congressional Democrats to pass the Freedom of Choice Act, which would enshrine unrestricted abortion in federal law.

But the pro-choice forces overreached, and Johnson was there to stymie them. Among the practices that would be protected if the Freedom of Choice Act passed was partial-birth abortion. This procedure was unknown in pro-life circles until September 1992, when an Ohio doctor, Martin Haskell, presented a paper to a National Abortion Federation conference. Haskell described what he called "Dilation and Extraction," which he said he had used over 700 times on women who were 20-26 weeks pregnant. As he explained it, when the baby's body has been extracted from the mother and only its head remains unborn, the surgeon "forces the scissors into the base of the skull or into the *foramen magnum*. Having safely entered the skull, he spreads the scissors to enlarge the opening. The surgeon removes the scissors and introduces a suction catheter into his hole and evacuates the skull contents. With the catheter still in place, he applies traction to the fetus, removing it completely from the patient."

Kevin Chadwick

Douglas Johnson

Johnson seized on Haskell's paper as a mobilizing tool. In early 1993, he passed a copy to Rep. Charles Canady of Florida, who introduced an amendment to the Freedom of Choice Act banning Haskell's procedure. Johnson persuaded numerous moderately pro-choice House members to insist they couldn't support the bill if it protected partial-birth abortion. The National Right to Life Committee distributed 6 million copies of Haskell's paper. When House Democrats refused to allow any modification to the Freedom of Choice Act, support weakened, and the bill never reached the House floor. In the end, it was Johnson's skill that prevented this or any other major pro-choice legislation from passing in 1993-94, despite Democratic control of both Congress and the White House and media hostility to the pro-life cause. "We emerged with some wounds," says Johnson, "but none of them mortal."

In the 1994 elections, 34 pro-choice House Democrats were unseated, and many on both sides of the issue expected a broad legislative push to restrict abortion. But Johnson and other pro-lifers decided to concentrate their efforts on banning partial-birth abortions even though they comprise less than 0.1 percent of the abortions performed each year. Not all anti-abortion groups agreed. "I don't understand the strategy of introducing the partial-birth abortion legislation," says Judie Brown, president of the 300,000-member American Life League. Brown preferred to pursue Rep. Bob Dornan's Right to Life Act, which would nullify state and federal laws permitting abortion.

Johnson and some other pro-life activists believe there are limits to what can be achieved through legislation. What is needed, they say, is a public education campaign against abortion. Highlighting the most grisly abortion procedures is meant not only to advance a limited legislative objective but also to raise awareness. "The partial-birth abortion bill is a sincere effort to save lives," says Johnson. "It is also designed to illustrate the abysmal state of protection for innocent human life and to demonstrate the abject captivity of the Clinton administration . . . to the abortion-on-demand advocacy groups."

During the congressional debate on the bill last year, the National Right to Life Committee took out a series of graphic advertisements in papers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* (the ad also appeared in this magazine). The ads depicted exactly what happens to the unborn child in a partial-birth abortion. When Canady displayed the illustrations on the House floor, a group of pro-choice House Democrats forced a vote trying to block the display. They lost, and they seem to be losing the public-relations battle, too. A December Tarrance poll found 71 percent support for banning partial-birth abortion.

In the short term, though, pro-choicers will win

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the fight. Clinton has vowed to veto the legislation, and pro-lifers lack the votes to override. This disappoints Johnson, but he sees a silver lining: "The veto underscores what is at stake in the 1996 election."

A little more than four years ago, he wrote in the *National Right to Life News* that the "horror story for 1992" would be the defeat of the staunchly pro-life George Bush. Johnson is working on an update of that article. Its title—"Horror Story for 1996: Clinton Reelected"—is still tentative. ♦

PSEUDO SCHOOL REFORM

by Myron Lieberman

ON MARCH 25-27, MOST OF THE governors, along with a business leader designated by each, will convene in an education summit co-sponsored by the National Governors' Association at the IBM facility in Palisades, New York. The co-hosts are Louis Gerstner, chairman and chief executive officer of IBM, and Wisconsin governor Tommy Thompson. The summit is being convened as a result of the slow progress, if you can call it that, of education reform. Specifically, the summit is supposed to focus on the development of academic standards and ways to assess them; also on schools' use of educational technology.

EDUCATION SUMMITS DEVOTED TO "BIPARTISAN" ISSUES INEVITABLY EVADE THE MAJOR PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN EDUCATION.

Unfortunately, it is already clear that this summit, like the 1989 one in Charlottesville, Virginia, will be unproductive; in fact, since its agenda is consciously devoted to "bipartisan"—that is, secondary—issues, it will divert resources from the underlying problems of American education. For instance, one of the major topics on the agenda is the inadequate use of educational technology. The summit cannot address this problem effectively because the summit is "bipartisan," whereas the solution to the ineffective use of technology is anything but bipartisan. Schools don't use technology because teachers have no incentives to use it and teachers' unions have abundant incentives not to use it, at least when it reduces labor costs.

Bear in mind that unions of school-district employees—especially the major teachers' unions, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT)—are applying tremendous pressure on school boards to spend their revenues on salaries and fringe benefits. Many districts do not spend enough on maintenance and would face strong opposition to expenditures for technology and related training. Education is by far our most labor intensive industry, but apparently not intensive enough for the teachers' unions. In California, the unions brought about passage of a law requiring that a certain percentage of school district budgets be allocated to teacher salaries. No private company would require itself to allocate a large part of its budget to the most expensive factor of production. On the contrary, if labor costs preempted most of its budget, efforts to reduce those costs would receive top priority. In education, however, there isn't any point to investing in labor-saving technology if states mandate high spending on labor.

One reason for the enormous increase in agricultural productivity is that our farmers are owners, hence they stand to gain from increasing productivity. In contrast, teachers are paid solely on the basis of their academic credits and years of teaching experience; increases in their productivity play no role whatsoever in their compensation and will not as long as the NEA and AFT have anything to say about it. As matters stand, they have a lot to say about it. The NEA alone will send more delegates to the Democratic convention than any state. In most states, its affiliate is among the two or three most powerful interest groups lobbying the legislature. When you factor in the also influential AFT, you get formidable resistance to any labor-saving innovation. Technology is acceptable if it makes the teacher's job easier, but not otherwise.

The other topics at the summit likewise avoid the education issues that business leaders should be facing. The NEA and AFT have resorted to boycotts to intimidate corporations and business leaders from advocating any weakening of the public school monopoly. The latest episode, in October 1995, was an appalling attack on Pepsi-Cola for offering private school scholarships to students in Jersey City; vending machines carrying Pepsi-Cola were sabotaged and boycotted by teachers supposedly entrusted with teaching democratic values to young people. The list

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of companies boycotted or threatened with boycotts by the NEA and AFT is too long to be recited here, but the unions' efforts to intimidate business leaders do not end there.

Sometimes the unions have boycotted or threatened to boycott companies merely because a corporate officer, acting as a private citizen, has said or done something to challenge the public school monopoly. Business leaders at the summit might at least consider telling the NEA/AFT that they will respond promptly and collectively to teachers'-union efforts to intimidate business leaders critical of the public school monopoly.

Education summits are based upon a reality that cannot be acknowledged openly, to wit: The appearance of reform is much more important to political and education leaders than the substance of it. Their election or reappointment depends on the public perception that they are "doing something" to remedy our education deficits. This perception is their primary need; actual improvement, or laying a genuine foundation for it, is desirable but not essential. This is why "education reform" is a growth industry: Education summits meet the political needs of the parties, even though they ignore the basic problems.

It could hardly be otherwise. Four hundred years ago, Machiavelli pointed out that whenever you change the status quo, you arouse antagonism from the interests that will be hurt by the change. Inasmuch as the teachers' unions are a core constituency of the Democratic party, it is impossible to achieve a bipartisan solution to any education problem resulting from or requiring a change in teachers'-union policy or practice.

Another such problem is the anti-entrepreneurial, anti-market culture of public education. The NEA and AFT are spending millions every year to demonize "privatization." Never mind that the NEA spends about 20 percent of its budget for contracted services; in public school systems, the practice is characterized as a right-wing extremist plot to undermine public education. The major targets of the NEA/AFT effort are the companies that sell services to schools; since the companies and services vary, the attacks degenerate into attacks on "for profit" companies generally. A typical example of how NEA publications characterize for profit enterprise (from an NEA "resource book" on corporate takeovers, dated September 1995) reads as follows :

> Those who believe the corporate sales pitch that deregulation and skilled private industry management techniques will solve the problems of public education should contemplate the savings and loan debacle, the airline company bankruptcies over the past decade, and the difficulties of airline travel today—all products of deregulation and private industry management techniques.
>
> Other notable examples of the genius of the marketplace are the soaring costs of health care in America and the millions of poor people whose primary medical care is in understaffed, overused hospital emergency rooms.

Oddly, it is the rare entrepreneur who recognizes the NEA as an enemy of business and of school improvement. One who does is Apple Computers founder Steven Jobs. An advocate of private-school choice, he explicitly argues that the teachers' unions are the main obstacle to education reform. Meanwhile, it boggles the mind to see Jobs's counterpart at Microsoft, Bill Gates, give $3 million to the NEA, perhaps the most anti-entrepreneurial organization in the United States. And there is nothing unusual about large corporations and business leaders' subsidizing the teachers' unions. Regrettably, the business leadership of the summit offers little hope for a more realistic approach to real problems. Co-chairman Louis

William Bramhall

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Gerstner, while CEO of RJR Nabisco, was instrumental in that company's sponsorship of experimental and demonstration projects in education. The projects were limited to public schools.

It will be interesting to see whether the business leaders at the summit agree with the fashionable cliché that effective school reform must be "bottom up," not "top down." This is NEA/AFT-speak for reforms that won't happen unless teachers (that is, their unions) agree to them.

Needless to say, the corporate executives attending the summit would not accept this nonsense in their own companies; surely, they would not say that their companies would never downsize their operations or eliminate ineffective practices without the employees' approval because doing so would be "top down." Nevertheless, the reality is that some of the companies represented at the summit are not going to risk antagonizing their union clients, even though giving teachers veto power over essential change is certain to entrench the status quo.

Inasmuch as accountability is another item on the summit agenda, participants might also ask Gerstner what there is to show for the millions of dollars RJR and its foundation have spent on education reform. The answer may explain why Gerstner is an appropriate choice to lead the parade of futilitarians at Palisades.

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Good News for Bob Dole

by Everett Carll Ladd

Now that Republican voters have said rather emphatically that they want Bob Dole to be their party's nominee, what does the race for the White House look like? Much is bound to happen between now and November 5 to shape the election. Still, we already know enough to declare a favorite.

A year ago, much of the political community saw the president in deep trouble and a likely loser. Now, it's the Republicans who are thought to be struggling. Every poll shows Clinton besting Dole. Margins vary, but in some recent polls they are large—17 points in the ABC News/*Washington Post* survey of March 8-10. Other data, however, point in the opposite direction, and when the whole range of findings is considered, Clinton's electoral prospects have not significantly improved. Despite surface appearances, Dole should be considered the favorite to win the presidency.

EVERY POLL MAY NOW SHOW CLINTON BESTING DOLE, BUT THESE EARLY TRIAL HEATS SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AS PREDICTORS.

I noted in these pages in December that early poll trial heats are simply not to be taken seriously as predictors. The latest findings come during a primary season in which competing Republicans have been beating up on one another, while the president has had a free ride. But the contest is about to enter its second round, where the matchup is Dole vs. Clinton. Lots of evidence from past elections shows how ephemeral trial-heat findings can be, right up to the last six weeks of the campaign. In 1980, an early January Gallup survey had Jimmy Carter leading Ronald Reagan by roughly two to one, and a Harris survey by even more than that. In 1988, a late July Gallup poll put Michael Dukakis ahead of George Bush by 17 percentage points. And in 1992, an end-of-March Gallup survey showed Bush leading Clinton by 18 points. I'm not finding fault with Gallup—other organizations got much the same results. It's just hard to measure a decision before most voters have made up their minds.

What is possible at this stage of a campaign, however, is to explore the election's underlying structure. Whenever an incumbent president is seeking reelection, his standing with voters is critical. The comparative standing of the major parties is another key. And voters' preferences as to policy direction are a third.

Bill Clinton's approval ratings have been relatively low throughout his presidency. In Gallup polls taken from January 1993 through February 1996, an average of 48 percent of adult Americans said they approved of his handling of the presidency. This puts him among the least popular of modern presidents, together with Nixon (48 percent composite approval score), Carter (47 percent), Ford (47 percent),

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and Truman (42 percent). What's more, Clinton's ratings are remarkably unvarying. His ratings in individual surveys deviate from his average less than those of any other modern president. Since January 1995, for example, Clinton's lowest approval percentage in a Gallup survey has been 44, his highest 53. At best, he has been unable to raise his support more than a few points above 50 percent.

Other measures show him even weaker. For example, only once in eight soundings since January 1994 has the NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll found a plurality saying that Clinton deserves reelection. Most recently, in mid-January 1996, 41 percent thought he merited reelection, 49 percent that he did not.

The character issue has dogged Clinton throughout his presidency. In mid-January, Gallup found just 34 percent saying that the phrase "keeps his promises" applied to Bill Clinton; 61 percent said it didn't apply. Similarly, only 40 percent thought "honest and trustworthy" fit him, and 44 percent thought "shares your values" described him. In a CBS News/*New York Times* poll taken in mid-January, only 34 percent agreed that Clinton "says what he really believes most of the time," while 59 percent selected the alternative "he says what he thinks most people want to hear." No modern president other than Richard Nixon has ranked lower in honesty and trust.

Turning to the parties' comparative standing, the downward blip in Republican approval many survey organizations recorded at the end of 1995 has now largely dissipated. Overall, the GOP's position looks significantly stronger today than it did during the 1980s and early 1990s. We see this in the generic congressional vote question, Which party's candidate would you be inclined to back in your congressional district? Despite the Republicans' success in presidential elections in the 1980s, Democrats routinely enjoyed a large lead on the congressional vote question—averaging 15 points in Gallup surveys. Just before the 1994 vote, however, Gallup found the Republicans pulling into a dead heat with the Democrats: Forty-six percent on November 2-6 said they would vote Republican, 46 percent Democratic. In fact, Republican House candidates got 53.4 percent of the two-party popular vote in House races. Subsequent polls show no falling off in Republican strength. In late February of this year, 48 percent said they would vote Democratic (Gallup survey), 46 percent Republican. A March 8-10 ABC/*Post* poll showed the Democrats favored by a larger margin—8 percentage points—but this poll is an outlier, and there is reason to discount it. In late October 1994, just days before the Republicans won the House vote by a 7-point margin, an ABC/*Post* poll recorded a 7-point Democratic edge.

Finally, and perhaps most important, the realignment of public sentiment that has been occurring since the 1970s on role-of-government questions shows no sign of reversal. When CBS News and the *New York Times* asked in their late-February 1996 survey, Would you "rather have a smaller government providing fewer services, or a bigger government providing more services," by two to one (61-30 percent) the public said less government. Back in April 1976, just 40 percent chose less government. The CBS/*Times* survey also asked respondents whether they thought that "government should do more to solve national problems" or that "government is doing too many things better left to business and individuals." The latter position was picked by roughly two-thirds (60-32 percent). Americans aren't "anti-government," but when asked, they say they want government slimmed down and power devolved from Washington to the states.

Bill Clinton now recognizes that the country's philosophic drift is counter to the predominant stance of his party, and he has struggled with considerable skill to accommodate the prevailing national views at least rhetorically. Still, limiting government's reach is the Republicans' agenda, not the Democrats'.

The GOP may yet muff the opportunity it has been given. We don't know for sure how soon-to-be presidential nominee Dole will fare down the campaign stretch. A third party or independent candidacy also could siphon off anti-Clinton votes, aiding the president's reelection—much as Ross Perot ensured his 1992 election. Even with these caveats, however, the structure of this year's presidential contest favors the Republicans.

Illustrations by Kent Lemon

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VOTERS AREN'T STUPID

by John J. Dilulio, Jr.

As the '96 election season heats up, policy elites of both parties are wondering out loud about the intelligence of the electorate, whether voters can tell a Clinton from a Dole, and how much average folks know about "the issues."

In a recent *Washington Post* column, for example, Richard Cohen called America "the dumbest nation on earth," a country "peopled by dolts who bellow at their government" but can't even name their senators. Most Americans think Washington spends more on foreign aid than it does on Medicare, sniffed Cohen. "Such blathering ignorance ought to be condemned." Still, "The good news is that the more a person knows, the more he's likely to vote." Those who are not informed and don't vote but still "crab, bitch, and kvetch" about government Cohen advises to "just shut up."

Others, however, don't want the voters to shut up. They want them to wise up, and they're willing to teach.

In his 1991 book *Democracy and Deliberation*, Prof. James Fishkin of the University of Texas at Austin concluded that the untutored voice of the American people is not "a voice worth listening to." A remedy Fishkin has championed is the "deliberative poll," designed to "sample public opinion toward specific issues both before and after people have had the opportunity to learn about and discuss those issues." Unlike an old-fashioned opinion survey, referendum, or election, a deliberative poll "overcomes the conditions that foster rational ignorance," Fishkin writes. Such a poll could allow a country, "acting through an engaged microcosm, to offer itself advice at a moment when it can make a real difference—before a primary, referendum or general election."

In January, Fishkin—backed by distinguished bipartisan advisers, diverse funders, and PBS—held a National Issues Convention in Austin. Some 459 randomly selected citizens accepted an invitation to "grapple with key issues by engaging in serious dialogue with each other and with presidential candidates." Spared the "steady drumbeat of sound bites and paid advertising," they were offered instead three days of all-expenses-paid "deliberation" about "the economy, the state of the family, and America's role in a post-cold war world."

After intensive briefings, many participants changed their views. Sure enough, support for the flat tax among Fishkin's "truly representative sample of the American people" fell from 43.5 percent to 29.8 percent; support for the proposition that the average worker is not fairly paid increased from 26.6 percent to 40.4 percent; opposition to cutting foreign aid rose from 9.3 percent to 20.6 percent; and support for increasing foreign aid rose from 36.1 percent to 50.7 percent.

Crime was not on the Austin agenda, but Fishkin has written glowingly of a 1994 British deliberative poll that saw support for fighting crime through incarceration drop from 57 percent to 37 percent. And there is a second crime connection. Briefing materials for the Austin conference were prepared in part by Public Agenda, a Manhattan research organization. In 1988, Public Agenda conducted a deliberative poll of 422 Alabama residents that pushed support for incarcerating armed robbers and shooters down 12 points, for incarcerating burglars down 49 points. By the end, most participants did not want most criminals locked up for most crimes.

VIRTUALLY ALL THE EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE NOT EASILY DUPED BY SPIN DOCTORS OR POLITICAL CONSULTANTS.

In my view, however, the American people do not deserve to be either bashed by pundits or reeducated by issues experts.

In his 1966 classic *The Responsible Electorate*, the late Harvard political scientist V.O. Key concluded, "Voters are not fools." Key analyzed voters who switched parties from one presidential election to another and found that most of them switched in a direction perfectly consistent with their own beliefs and interests. His pioneering research painted "an image of an electorate moved by concern about central and relevant questions of public policy, of governmental performance, and of executive personality."

Key's responsible electorate was no mirage. In the three decades since he wrote, the best empirical studies of political participation in the United States have found that average Americans are quite capable of figuring out their own values and needs in relation to electoral politics and policy choices. Virtually all of the evidence shows that the American people are not easily duped by high-paid media spin doctors or political consultants.

Most citizen-voters can filter out bogus information and smell a rat in candidate's clothing. According to a recent textbook by political scientists Edward S. Greenberg and Benjamin I. Page, "recent research has

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indicated that Americans' collective policy preferences react rather sensibly to events, to changing circumstances, to new information, so that we can speak of a 'rational public.'"

Indeed we can. For starters, you don't need to know the names of your senators or how much gets spent on what to participate well and vote rationally. Inside-the-Beltway pundits, political activists, and people whose ideology governs their voting decisions need to know all that and more, because they tend to vote prospectively. They examine the rival candidates' views on the issues of the day and then cast their ballots (or file their columns) accordingly.

But most folks are not political junkies or party activists. Average citizens vote retrospectively. We the people look at how things have gone in the recent past and then vote for the incumbent if we like what has happened, against the incumbent if we don't. In his 1981 book *Retrospective Voting*, Harvard political scientist Morris Fiorina echoed Key's insight that the electorate could learn a good deal of what it needed to reach an informed decision simply by monitoring the performance of those in power. Ronald Reagan encouraged voters to do this in 1980, when he asked them whether they were better off than they had been four years earlier. He was appealing to them for a retrospective vote.

To be sure, media mavens and policy wonks make a living debating "the issues." But there are at least two types of issue that matter in a representative democracy. First, there are parties' and candidates' real or perceived positions on policy questions—extend affirmative action or end it, protect life or the right to abortion, increase foreign aid or cut it, balance the budget now, later, or never. These "position" issues are what political journalists, think tankers, and strategists eat, sleep, and scold the voters for not knowing or caring enough about.

But there are other issues that do not pose either-or policy choices and do not divide the electorate along partisan or ideological lines. These include resolute leadership, political corruption, a robust economy, and good character. There is no constituency for economic distress, unpatriotic beliefs, or using public office for private gain. Voters universally disapprove of all these, just as they universally approve of rising standards of living, love of country, and honesty in office. Political scientists call these "valence" issues, and increasingly electoral victory turns on them. Rival candidates and parties try to get voters to think of the other side in negative valence terms and of themselves in positive valence terms.

A central message of the empirical literature on national elections is that most citizens—whether they are moved by position issues, valence issues, or both—make political choices that coherently reflect their personal views and interests.

Thus, in 1992 some Americans may have voted prospectively and in position-issue terms for Clinton because they had read up on his middle-class tax-cut plan and liked it better than Bush's alternative. Others may have voted retrospectively for Clinton, about whom they knew nothing, because they were hurting economically and Bush hadn't helped them. Still others may have voted in valence terms, for Clinton (new blood!) or against him (bad character!). Meanwhile, the country's few remaining yellow dog Democrats were voting for Clinton because he was a Democrat, and the thickening ranks of rock-ribbed Republicans were voting against him because he was not a Republican. Which of these voters should be counted as unreasonable, irrational, or uninformed? I say, none.

Still, aren't the American people misled by eight-second sound bites and super-negative ads? Not really. First, recall that the American tradition of attacking one's political opponents is at least as old as the Federalist attack on the defenders of the Articles of Confederation as "Anti-Federalists." It's as old as the charge that Thomas Jefferson was a "howling atheist" and that Grover Cleveland had fathered a child out of wedlock (he had).

A study just published by political scientists Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar, based on experiments involving 3,500 potential voters, confirms that the main effect of "going negative" is not to change voters' minds or weaken partisan loyalties but to make voters more likely to sit out an election. Whether induced by negative ads or other things, the decision not to vote can be as much a rational act of political self-expression and self-interest as the decision to vote.

Still, it remains true that voters are not Wise Men, and whatever the issue, the tyranny of the majority is always a threat. That's why James Madison and company gave us a representative democracy designed so that leaders mediate, not mirror, public views. That's why we have constitutional machinery built to restrain and refine the will of temporary voting majorities but empower the will of majorities that persist through staggered legislative elections, presidential contests, and judicial appointments. Warts and all, the system works because the people play their part.

So it's not the economy, stupid. It's that the voters aren't stupid, stupid.

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Remember Nicaragua?

By Robert Kagan

Two months ago, the leading candidate for president in Nicaragua barely survived an assassination attempt when his motorcade was attacked by masked gunmen. You may be forgiven for not knowing this, indeed for never having heard of Arnoldo Aleman, the former mayor of Managua who is far ahead of all other candidates in the polls. You probably don't even know that Nicaragua will be holding presidential elections this October, the first since the Communist Sandinistas lost to Violeta Chamorro six years ago, way back in the twilight of the Cold War.

And why should you? Neither the American press, nor the Clinton administration, nor the Republican-led Congress has paid much attention to Nicaragua these past few years. After more than a decade of revolution and counterrevolution, aided and abetted by the United States both indirectly and directly, Nicaragua has fallen victim to a new kind of conspiracy in Washington: a conspiracy of indifference.

Only a decade ago, Nicaragua was such a central concern in the United States that the names of its government's leaders and those of its political and military opposition were more familiar to many people than the names of congressmen and senators—names like Daniel and Humberto Ortega, Tomas Borge, and Ernesto Cardenal (in the Communist corner) and Arturo Cruz (Jr. and Sr.), Eden Pastora, and Alfonso Robelo (in the contra corner). The foreign policy of the United States came to center around the Central American nation of 3 million people, approximately the size of Massachusetts. High-ranking officials went to jail because of it. And six years ago, all the toil and agony seemed to reach an unexpectedly triumphant conclusion when the democratic forces led by presidential candidate Violeta Chamorro defeated the Communist Sandinista government in a landslide.

Now, six years later, Nicaragua's shaky experiment in democracy is at risk from a political habit that far predates the nation's brushes with democracy and communism: assassination as a pragmatic tool of governance. But there is a way of preventing the country from falling back into its long-standing cycle of tyranny intermingled with revolution and anarchy. It is simple, costs very little, and would be crowned with success. All it requires is that American policy-makers pay Nicaragua some attention between now and the elections to be held in October.

This article has been adapted from Contributing Editor Robert Kagan's A Twilight Struggle: American Power and Nicaragua, 1977-1990, *just published by the Free Press.*

In recent months, the Chamorro government has become more the problem than the solution to Nicaragua's lingering ills. The deformities of a political culture don't vanish overnight, and its one free election has not proved a panacea for Nicaragua. Following a long tradition of *continuismo*, honed to perfection by the Somoza family from the 1930s to the 1970s, the Chamorro government has begun trying to perpetuate itself by engineering the election of Antonio Lacayo, Chamorro's son-in-law and the current power behind the throne.

But *continuismo* is not so easy to pull off if you have to play by democratic rules, and so the Chamorro government has been bending those rules a bit. Lacayo has had to finagle to get around a wise provision in the Nicaraguan constitution prohibiting relatives of the sitting president from running for the office. He seems to have succeeded, and now his hopes rest on the chance that Aleman and former revolutionary dictator Daniel Ortega will cancel each other out in a first round of voting and leave Lacayo as the "centrist" choice in a second round.

Unfortunately for Lacayo, his popularity among the Nicaraguan people is at Morry Taylor levels, and so some other nefarious sleights-of-hand have been required to tilt the electoral system. Odd new voter registration rules threaten to make it hard for Aleman's main constituency—the hundreds of thousands of peasants and small farmers, including former contras and their supporters—to get to the polls in November. Even Ortega, the second most popular candidate, has complained of mistreatment and persecution at the hands of the government, a fitting irony for

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someone who, at one time or another, jailed or repressed almost every major political figure on the Nicaraguan scene. And then there's the question of whether Aleman can survive long enough to participate in the October elections. The January assassination attempt may not be the last.

All this is taking place in international darkness—a striking contrast to February 1990, when the Sandinistas held their ill-fated elections. The whole world was watching then. Former President Jimmy Carter led an effort to monitor the elections that included hundreds of observers from both the United Nations and the Organization of American States. Monitoring began months before the actual vote. Registration laws made it possible for approximately 1.7 million out of 1.9 million eligible voters to cast a ballot. Every action of the Sandinista-controlled electoral commission was observed and commented upon by powerful figures like Carter, Elliot Richardson, Costa Rica's Nobel-Prize-winning former president Oscar Arias, and an intensely interested Bush administration.

On election day, 700 official observers traveled throughout the country by jeep, helicopter, on horseback, and on foot, visiting more than half of the 4,000-plus polling stations. In addition to these official observers, there were more than 1,000 unofficial observers from many countries and as many as 1,000 foreign journalists present. Most came to watch the Sandinistas win, but their presence wound up ensuring a landslide defeat. A large majority of Nicaraguan voters, finally confident that their vote would be counted, turned the Sandinistas out of power.

These days, you certainly wouldn't know from listening to the Clinton administration that anything was amiss in Nicaragua. Neither President Clinton nor Secretary of State Warren Christopher nor National Security Adviser Anthony Lake has spoken publicly about Nicaragua—despite the fact that Christopher once played a significant part in the Carter administration's bungled effort to steer Nicaragua toward democracy in the late 1970s, and Lake wrote a much-esteemed book about that fiasco. When Christopher made his first-ever trip to Latin America last month, he didn't even mention the coming elections in Nicaragua. The theme of his trip was the environment, not democracy. And at his one Central American stop, in El Salvador, Christopher boldly declared that "the buildups of heat-trapping or greenhouse gases are among the most significant long-term environmental and diplomatic challenges facing the world." The besieged and beleaguered *campesinos* of northern Nicaragua will be glad to hear it.

But, truth to tell, Democrats don't feel a proprietary interest in Nicaragua's fate today. We can send 10,000 troops to try to establish democracy in Haiti, but we cannot spend 10 minutes thinking about how to support the democracy we helped establish in Nicaragua. Some of this is simply partisan American politics. In the 1980s and 90s, Nicaragua was a Republican party problem, and the democracy born there was more a Republican than a Democratic success.

But today's Republican leaders (with the notable exception of Jesse Helms) have either forgotten what they once claimed was their enormous concern for the peaceful democratization of Nicaragua or are too new to Washington to have participated in those raucous 1980s debates over communism and contras. "Reagan Doctrine"? "Freedom fighters"? "Democratic revolution"? Six years ago these phrases stirred Republican souls. Today they are forgotten and incomprehensible relics of a bygone era, the modern version of Browning's "I am Ozymandias/Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair."

It would not be surprising if Nicaragua, once the showcase of Republican foreign policy successes, became the first victim of the Republicans' abandonment of the principles which made those successes possible. That would be a tragedy, but it would not be novel. Nicaragua has served as a strange kind of barometer of America's shifting foreign policy moods throughout the 20th century.

When Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson extended the umbrella of American hegemony over the Western Hemisphere at the beginning of this century, proclaiming the desire to lift its troubled peoples "upward toward peace and order" and to teach them "to elect good men," Nicaragua was the site of a 21-year Marine occupation that ended in 1933 with the first free elections in its tumultuous history.

When the United States turned toward isolationism in the early 1930s, Franklin Roosevelt's see-no-evil "Good Neighbor" policy eased the way for General Anastasio Somoza to overthrow Nicaragua's nascent democratic system and impose a family dynasty that survived the next four decades. When Jimmy Carter took office in 1977, traumatized by Vietnam and guilt-ridden by a history of American support for Latin dictators, he rattled the Somoza dynasty until it collapsed but then stood by while a 16-year-old Marxist-Leninist "liberation" movement—the Sandinistas—won a stunning revolutionary triumph.

The election of Ronald Reagan opened a new chapter in the remarkably intertwined history of the two countries. Under Reagan, the United States embarked on an unprecedented effort to spread democratic insti-

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tutions in the Western Hemisphere and around the world as part of a global ideological offensive against communism. The triumph of 1990 was a product of this broad shift in American policy in the 1980s. And that same foreign policy, dubbed the "Reagan Doctrine" in 1985 by Charles Krauthammer, ultimately proved a catalyst in bringing about America's peaceful victory in the Cold War.

The Reagan Doctrine was born in Central America. Three months after the successful U.S.-backed elections in El Salvador in 1982, Reagan gave a speech to the British Parliament, where for the first time in his presidency he proclaimed America's support for democratic change everywhere in the world—the so-called "Westminster Speech." Emboldened by the results in El Salvador, where "suffering people were offered a chance to vote," Reagan declared it the right of all human beings to struggle for freedom and democracy and the obligation of the United States to support that struggle. "If the rest of this century is to witness the gradual growth of freedom and democratic ideals," he said, "we must take actions to assist the campaign for democracy." Those actions included support for those struggling for freedom in Communist countries like Sandinista Nicaragua.

Reagan outlined his broad vision of a democratic revolution that would eventually engulf even the Soviet Union. The Soviets, he said, were "not immune from the reality of what is going on in the world." And he offered a confident prediction of the Soviet Union's future that was so optimistic as to be ridiculed at the time. "It has happened in the past," he insisted, that

> a small ruling elite either mistakenly attempts to ease domestic unrest through greater repression and foreign adventure, or it chooses a wiser course. It begins to allow its people a voice in their own destiny. Even if this latter process is not realized soon, I believe the renewed strength of the democratic movement, complemented by a global campaign for freedom, will strengthen the prospects for arms control and a world at peace.

While the Reagan Doctrine is best remembered as support for anti-Communist guerrilla movements in Nicaragua, Angola, Afghanistan, and Cambodia, from the start it had a broader meaning and purpose. By linking together the simultaneous struggles for democracy in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Eastern Europe, and in the Soviet Union itself, Reagan appealed to the enduring idealism of Americans across the political spectrum. The Reagan Doctrine wrapped a conservative Republican president's aggressive anti-Communist strategy in a broader cloak that attracted moderate Democrats and confounded liberals.

It responded to the political circumstances of post-

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Vietnam America, in which unabashed support for right-wing dictatorships, even those fighting Communist guerrillas, could not withstand popular scrutiny and distaste, and in which the support of anti-Communist guerrilla groups had to be justified on more than "realist" or anti-Communist grounds. For Reagan, the new doctrine suited his preferred political style. It was a message of optimism, rather than of despair; it pointed to opportunities rather than dangers. The new doctrine offered the possibility of an end to the Cold War that was both peaceful and democratic.

While Reagan's less idealistic advisers might have seen in this strategy only an effective means of bleeding the Soviet Union's resources and punishing it for expanding its reach in the 1970s, that was not the way Reagan explained his policies to the American people. The purpose, he proclaimed, was democracy, not aggressive containment waged to the last Afghan or Nicaraguan.

Reagan was venturing onto uncharted ideological terrain, leaving traditional Republican foreign policy behind. Dominated by "realists" for whom such democratic "messianism" was a recipe for endless disillusionment and failure, and by more traditional anti-Communists, highly skeptical that democracy among allied countries in the developing world could be pursued without undermining American interests, the Republican party and the conservative movement were not the natural home for the Reagan Doctrine in its double-edged form.

But the Reagan Doctrine's effectiveness in uniting the country behind an assertive American foreign policy was undeniable. At the height of the Cold War, with the most fervently anti-Communist president in American history, a Congress half-controlled by Democrats, and a populace moved by conflicting desires for national assertiveness and withdrawal, the Reagan Doctrine came as close as any other international political strategy to answering the contradictory demands of the time. It proved both attractive and frightening to a Democratic party divided between anti-Communists and liberal idealists and seeking a marriage between the two.

The tearing down of the old "double standard"—by which conservatives and liberals accused one another of coddling dictators of the left or right—came as welcome relief to many Democrats, who could better justify their anti-communism when it was explicitly tied to support of democracy. For moderate and conservative Democrats, the attraction of the Reagan Doctrine was that its anti-communism was subsumed in a higher idealism with Democratic roots; it removed some of the stigma that Democrats had long attached to Republican anti-communism.

Over the course of the 1980s, therefore, the Reagan Doctrine evolved from a tactic of political salesmanship into a successful grand strategy for U.S. foreign policy. Its sweeping application of American political philosophy and morality to the conduct of international affairs propelled the United States and its allies safely through the end of the Cold War. The world it helped produce in the post-Cold War era was safer and more conducive to American material interests and ideals than at any time in the nation's history. The holding of free elections in Nicaragua was only one brick in this great edifice, but it had value as an enduring symbol of the Reagan Doctrine's achievements.

Such a successful policy ought to have survived the end of the Cold War. Why abandon a strategy that worked so well for the United States? But it was precisely the success of Reagan's foreign policy that has now led to its unraveling. The Communist danger which was overwhelmed by the Reagan-led ideological offensive has disappeared, depriving many Americans, and especially many Republicans, of the old rationale for a pro-democratic foreign policy in Nicaragua and elsewhere. After being vanquished by Reaganite idealism, "realism" has returned triumphant. As a result, most Americans believe that whatever happens in Nicaragua, whether presidential candidates are assassinated or elections are stolen, matters little to the United States. If our "vital national security interests" are no longer threatened by Soviet-backed Communist governments, then what concern need we have for the fate of Nicaraguan democracy?

In Nicaragua, and in other countries in this hemisphere, we seem to be caught in an endless repeating cycle of intervention and withdrawal, intervention and withdrawal. Ten years ago, we spent hundreds of millions of dollars, supported a brutal war, fought vicious political battles at home, and suffered through monumental scandals, all to put an end to Communist tyranny and bring democratic elections to Nicaragua. Having accomplished that goal, however, we seem prepared now to wash our hands of the place. The pattern is certainly familiar enough. In the 1930s, after two decades of occupation and the supervision of fair elections, the United States abruptly turned away and allowed the fragile edifice it had built to be destroyed under Somoza's heel. Then, as now, the United States suffered from an apparently incurable case of inconsistency and inattention. Today, as in the 1930s, that inattention threatens the democratic insti-

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tutions we did so much to implant in Nicaragua.

But the United States only has to do a very little bit to keep Nicaragua on a reasonably steady course in its democratic development. The 1990 elections did succeed in creating a more open society, one where criticism of the government can be heard uncensored in the media and in the National Assembly. The fresh winds of open democratic processes have tattered the old Sandinista party. It has splintered into factions. The military, once fully in Sandinista service, seems to have moved in the direction of political neutrality. The Nicaraguan economy remains in dire straits but is showing signs of improvement. And the most obvious symbol of the changing political culture in Nicaragua is the great success of someone like Arnoldo Aleman, a government critic outside the elite circles of power who nevertheless outpolls the government's favored candidate ten-to-one.

Success in Nicaragua does not require a war, an economic blockade, or even large amounts of foreign aid. All Nicaragua needs is a few months' worth of careful international scrutiny, ensuring a second fair election in October. The country craves the attention, and the voters need the security that scrutiny would provide.

If the United States pursued a consistent policy, one that assumed responsibility for the development of democratic institutions and the peaceful transfer of power in Nicaragua, it could break out of its cycle of spasmodic intervention and hasty withdrawal that has been harmful to both countries. Indeed, the more the United States assumed such a role, the less it would have to use its power directly. A steady, low level of involvement, making subtle use of American influence, would probably obviate the need for the kinds of forceful interventions that have caused so much controversy over the years. After all, the exercise of only a little influence would probably have prevented the first Somoza from upsetting the electoral system established in the late 1920s. Not much more would have been necessary to manage the transition from the Somoza dictatorship to a more moderate, democratic government in 1979. In the 1990s, a steady involvement by the United States could help forestall developments that may eventually threaten Nicaragua's peace again.

But a steady policy requires steady adherence to some broader principles. Perhaps it is time for the United States, and especially for Republicans, to pick up the discarded principles of the Reagan Doctrine, to place our ideals once again at the center of our foreign policy. Sometimes such a principled foreign policy will require the sacrifice of blood and treasure. Happily, in Nicaragua, it requires only a watchful eye. ♦

What I Learned About How We Pick a President

By Lamar Alexander

While my wounds are fresh, let me offer several ways to fix how we nominate presidents. First, for those who only see it on *Inside Politics*, let me describe what running for president really feels like (especially when you have just lost). It is like scaling a cliff for three years in the dark to earn the privilege of shooting one NBA-range three-point shot, i.e., the New Hampshire primary. It is like walking above Niagara Falls on a swaying tightrope as the wind blows and the crowd shouts, "FALL!" This by itself is one reason to salute Bob Dole for making his way so well through such an obstacle course.

Lamar Alexander was a Republican presidential candidate in 1996.

Now, to fix the process (although I should proclaim up front and loudly that it is the candidate who must accept responsibility for losing, not the process):

• *Report on those who are actually running for president.* It sometimes seemed that 90 percent of the political news during 1995 was about numerous Americans, estimable as they may have been, who had no intention of running or who couldn't win even if they did.

• *Ban the phrase "the motley crew."* Referring to those of us actually running, this phrase usually begins to appear after several months of stories about those

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who aren't running. Isn't it time after 200-plus years of presidential elections to realize that any American looks better rocking on the porch than he (or she) does trudging through the mud buck-naked with spotlights turned on (another way to describe participation in the current presidential nominating process)?

• *Raise the limits on individual giving to campaigns from $1,000 to $5,000.* The well-intentioned $1,000 limit, placed into the federal law after Watergate, was meant to reduce the influence of money in politics. As with many federal laws, it has done just the opposite. For example, to raise $10 million in 1995 for my campaign, I attended 250 fund-raising events. This took about 70 percent of my time. I became unusually well acquainted with a great many good Americans capable of giving $1,000 (who probably represent a cross section of one percent of all the people in the country). Wouldn't I have been a better candidate—and the country better off had I been elected—if I had spent more time traveling around America and visiting our allies abroad? (I actually did this during 1994, when I was not meeting nice people who could give $1,000.)

• *Remove the state spending limits.* This is step two in the crusade to deal with the phenomenon of the zillionaire in politics. Think of it this way: Say the fifth-grade teacher organizes a contest for class president with water pistols as the weapon of choice; then some kid arrives with a machine gun. Either take away the new kid's machine gun (Bill Bradley suggests a constitutional amendment to limit what individuals can spend on their own campaigns) or give the rest of the fifth graders the freedom to raise and spend enough money to buy their own machine guns. In one week just before the New Hampshire primary, Steve Forbes bought 700 ads on one Boston television station in one week, most of them negative advertising against Dole (plus a few gentler ads against me). Forbes, let us remember, spent almost no time raising his money and had no limits on what he spent per state. The rest of us did. If New Hampshire is most of the ballgame in the presidential primaries, why shouldn't we be permitted to defend ourselves even if we use up all the money the government allows us to spend during the entire campaign?

THE $1,000 LIMIT, PUT IN PLACE AFTER WATERGATE, WAS MEANT TO REDUCE THE INFLUENCE OF MONEY IN POLITICS. IT HAS DONE JUST THE OPPOSITE.

• *Deregulate the election process.* The Federal Election Commission is full of competent people trying to do their jobs (several of whom are about to audit my campaign, which, if everything works out perfectly, will only take only about three years. I am not kidding). The campaigns are grossly overregulated. Of the $10 million our campaign raised during 1995, about $1 million went for accountants and lawyers for compliance with the federal rules. Is it really necessary, for example, for the federal government to decide that a candidate's campaign T-shirts need not bear the "Paid for by..." disclaimer? Fewer rules and full disclosure should be the bywords here.

• *Start the coverage earlier.* From the moment the networks began to cover the campaign (this year it was not until late January), you could feel the lift. As a candidate, you can also feel the collapse. I cannot help but think that there are ways—even many months out—to relate the day's news about, say, the failure of the Hartford school system's private-management contract to what the presidential candidates say about how schools should be run.

• *Spread it out.* At a breakfast in Washington in November, I said this to my friends in the news media: "If you guys were sportswriters, you would arrive during the last quarter of the Final Four championship game and claim you had covered the entire basketball season." You can imagine how many friends I made with this statement, but I was right. By my count, the news media covered the presidential race aggressively for just 21 days, from the Iowa caucus on February 10 until the South Carolina primary on March 2. Most of what went before consisted of asking people like me, "Why are you behind Bob Dole 72-3 in the polls?" at a time when everyone knew Dole and no one had ever heard of me. After South Carolina, the most frequently asked question was, "When are you going to get out?" So, most of us did. Let us hope the national political writers never decide to become umpires. The World Series wouldn't last more than one inning.

Now, in defense of the media, it is hard to cover a 21-day wild rollercoaster ride, which is what the nominating process has become: 38 primaries in 25 days. Let's change this: Let Iowa and New Hampshire go it alone in February. Then, require all the other states to hold their primaries on the second Tuesday of March, April, or May. This would give winners a chance to capitalize on successes, voters a chance to digest new faces, and candidates a chance to actually meet voters. What do you think would have happened this year if after the surprising New Hampshire primary (Buchanan winning, Dole stumbling, me surging, Forbes falling) there had been three weeks to campaign before a March 12 primary in a bunch of states?

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Then another month until another set of primaries? Lots more interesting—and lots more conducive to sound judgment by the voters, too.

• *Create a new C-SPAN channel to cover the country outside Washington.* Chief executives from outside Washington sometimes make the best chief executives in the country. Why not a cable channel devoted entirely to Michigan governor John Engler's charter schools, San Antonio county executive Cyndi Krier's crime program, Milwaukee's school-choice program? Give these leaders as much C-SPAN face-time as members of Congress. This will give the public more exposure to state and local politicians who might then have a better chance of winning national office.

• *Let the candidates speak more often for themselves.* Praise the media here. C-SPAN's *Road to the White House* on Sunday nights set the pace. I was astonished how many told me they saw C-SPAN's 50-minute coverage in July of my walk across New Hampshire. The *New York Times* printed excerpts from candidates' speeches, even some very long excerpts. The networks all showed unedited stump speeches of the major candidates.

• *Find the good and praise it.* These were always the words of my friend the late Alex Haley. I can find the good easily about this process, even with its flaws. During the last year I walked across New Hampshire meeting several hundred people a day, spent 80 days in Iowa in maybe 200 meetings that ranged from 20 to 300 people, and had at least 50 meetings in Florida with the delegates to the Presidency III straw poll. During most of these meetings I was little known and unencumbered by news media. At least the news media presence was so small it did not disrupt the flow of the session.

I remember wishing time after time that anybody who had any sense of cynicism about our presidential selection process could be with me, as a fly on the wall—because they could not be cynical after hearing and seeing and feeling what I saw. The audience always listened carefully. Their questions went straight to the heart of what kind of country we could have, of our jobs, our schools, our neighborhoods, and our families. In meeting after meeting, I came away certain that this is a nation hungry for a vision contest, not one willing to tolerate a trivial presidential election. There is a great market in the American electorate for a full-fledged discussion about what kind of country we can have in the year 2000 and beyond.

THE NOMINATING PROCESS HAS BECOME A 21-DAY ROLLERCOASTER RIDE: 38 PRIMARIES IN 25 DAYS. LET'S SPREAD THEM OUT.

The reason to make certain we have a properly functioning presidential nominating process is that the presidency itself is our most important institution as we go into the new century, and the debate about who should be that president is our most useful national discussion. ♦

HARVARD LOVES DIVERSITY

By Harvey Mansfield

A 58-page report from the president of Harvard on "Diversity and Learning" may not seem like hot stuff—and it isn't, really—but it shows where American education is today. Since Harvard is run by liberals and has been for some time, it is no surprise that Neil Rudenstine should write a defense of the liberal policy of affirmative action. What is striking is that he calls up the names of old-time liberals from the days when dead white males were men, and proud of it.

Rudenstine's report has not received as much attention as it deserves. It has not aroused much controversy among students, and the *Crimson*, Harvard's student newspaper, found it lacking in fresh ideas. But the report was not meant to offer new ideas, and it has perhaps received as much attention as Rudenstine wanted. President since 1991, Rudenstine has kept a low profile, and this is his first venture into a hot political topic. Although he refers to controversy over

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diversity, he writes dispassionately, raises no new questions, and tries not to add to the controversy. He claims that since the 19th century, Harvard has sought diversity as can be seen in quotations from its best-known presidents—Charles W. Eliot, A. Lawrence Lowell, James B. Conant—all of whom actually used the precious word. Like an administrator ably deflecting public anxiety, and wary of increasing what he means to allay, Rudenstine reassures any skeptics that, with affirmative action, Harvard is merely doing what it has always done, which surely was done, and is still being done, for good reason.

Rarely these days does Harvard praise its tradition, and it is welcome to see some respect for the good done by dead white males. But in this case (as often happens), tradition is praised so as to cover a departure from it. Affirmative action is not the continuation of a long-time search for diversity at Harvard. When it was instituted in the late 60s, it was a fundamental change, and that is what it remains. In the past, diversity was sought for the sake of academic excellence; now it is sought at the expense of excellence.

It would be wrong to suggest that Harvard has abandoned its "commitment to excellence" or the attempt to assess "individual merit" in admitting undergraduates, for Rudenstine proclaims the institution's devotion to these things. The trouble is not that individual merit is denied, but that it is compromised—and the need for compromise is then denied. The report says that along with individual merit, the applicant's contribution to the whole community is weighed, so that students will be challenged and enriched by being with others unlike themselves. The student body should consist not only of future professors but should comprise in all its "diversity" the future elite (elite is my term, not Rudenstine's). But the question the report ducks is this: Should race be a category in the diversity along with musical, athletic or literary talent, or political ambition, or scientific promise? Should the title for admission for some students be the color of their skin?

Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard from 1869 to 1909, set out to transform a college into a university, and to do this he sought to attract students of diverse religions and from diverse regions of the country. But by "diversity" Eliot meant a diversity of talents, not a mere variety of backgrounds, much less proportional representation of racial groups. Diversity was subordinated to the ruling principle of academic excellence and made to serve it.

Rudenstine, quoting his predecessor Derek Bok, tries to give the impression that recruiting black students for Harvard is a mere extension of a policy of diversity from geography to race. But there is a big difference he does not mention: the stubborn and unwelcome fact that blacks do not perform as well as other groups on standardized tests. I do not know whether this fact is inherited or acquired, so I will just call it stubborn. It certainly is unwelcome, and all the more because the difference is not small. For classes entering Harvard in 1991 and 1992, the difference in SAT scores between blacks and whites was 95 points (out of a total of 1600); and this was the smallest discrepancy in any of the colleges reporting to the Consortium on Financing Higher Education, which made the survey. At the University of California, Berkeley, the difference was 288 points.

Without considering—or rather *focusing on*—this discrepancy, no discussion of affirmative action can claim even to have begun. For the difficulty is here; it is not recruitment and it is not racism. Rudenstine in cautious terms rebuts the argument that affirmative action stigmatizes blacks, but he shows by his silence on the crucial point that he is afraid of stigmatizing blacks. Affirmative action prevents its defenders from speaking frankly about what they have done, about what they had to do, to bring diversity. They should not think their silence goes unnoticed by students, by the general public, or by blacks. Their refusal to discuss or even identify the central difficulty is stigma enough by itself.

The liberals (including those at Harvard) who instituted affirmative action took a big risk when they made race an avowed category of diversity. They may have hoped that race would cause no more trouble than geography, that finding able blacks would be as easy, or as hard, as finding able Californians. The risk was that nothing untoward would emerge, no awkward fact calling into question the association of diversity and merit. Unfortunately, once race is on the list of things to look for, it is hard to take it off unobtrusively.

A further sign of Rudenstine's embarrassment is his failure to mention the great influx of Asians at Harvard in the last two decades. Here is a large addition of diversity (and there are, moreover, varieties of Asians) from those who arrived without fanfare and, above all, without the benefit of preferences. If anything, Asians have been victims of affirmative action. But to consider this obvious event, at which partisans of diversity ought to rejoice, might call attention to the stubborn and unwelcome fact of black

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underperformance, which needs to be buried.

Somewhere in the course of Rudenstine's report (about p. 45) the idea of diversity as inherited from the past is suddenly transformed into the new, multicultural idea of representation. The liberal heroes he quotes in support of diversity—John Milton and John Stuart Mill—had no thought that diversity might require proportional representation of ethnic groups. Certainly not! For them true diversity was above all diversity of opinion, and that was the product of a few strongminded, even eccentric, individuals—the sort of people who stand on their own feet, who do not bow to public opinion, or look to role models, or need the support of a critical mass of other individuals like themselves.

The few conservatives on the faculty at Harvard might serve as an example of the sort of diversity that Milton and Mill had in mind. They are a mere sprinkling in the dull mass of liberals in ridiculous disproportion to their number in the general population. True diversity comes from those who challenge the liberal orthodoxy to which Rudenstine gives voice. Harvard has no program to recruit *them*.

Rudenstine says that he rejects quotas, but anyone who uses the word "underrepresentation" encourages quotas. That term sets up a moral expectation that each group is entitled to its proportionate share of the best positions of every kind. Perhaps the expectation will not be made specific or will not be strictly enforced, but it will exert constant pressure against an unbiased concern for merit. Indeed, that pressure is just what proponents of affirmative action say they want to maintain. They do not want quotas, but they want the disposition to quotas that makes the formal requirement unnecessary—and keeps it concealed. Representation has to do with political power, not with academic excellence.

The harm done by "diversity," née affirmative action, is not to the quality of the students, at least at Harvard. Harvard's black students are capable and self-reliant, and they do not need to be fussed over. The harm is to the morale of the institution, which depends almost entirely on its devotion to academic excellence. As things stand, that devotion is compromised by the desire for diversity—and the extent of the compromise is indicated by the fact that it is not admitted.

Nowhere in his report does Rudenstine allow that diversity might pose a problem for excellence. A reader would have to infer that possibility from Rudenstine's avoidance of it. In his thinking, the goal of diversity is on a par with excellence or above it. He says that "the need to sustain rigorous academic standards is clear." But he adds that "the more difficult and genuine challenge" is to secure diversity.

The truth is just the opposite. It is easy to indulge "other significant values" than excellence and to pretend that nothing has happened and that our patron saint John Stuart Mill would smile on us. What is hard is to sustain excellence against the temptation of other values that appear to be more significant.

The other value most in evidence in American education today is self-esteem. Instead of holding students to "rigorous academic standards," our schools and universities aim to make their charges feel good about themselves and their ethnic identities. Harvard, where the average grade of all courses is above B plus, is a full participant—no, a leader—in feel-good education

It would be pleasing to think that President Rudenstine wants to oppose this noxious trend and to replace diversity for the sake of self-esteem and group identity with diversity for excellence. That is what Harvard's tradition, properly understood, would endorse. But he simply does not discuss diversity as usually seen on the agenda of multiculturalism. He does not appreciate, or fears to say, that it takes an effort, indeed a battle, to recapture and restore diversity as an instrument of excellence. So he leaves it unclear whether Harvard's purpose is to educate blacks or represent them proportionately and improve their self-esteem. The result is not only to confirm the ascendancy of self-esteem but also to give it the legitimacy of seeming excellence, as if the two were the same. A more full-hearted, forthright defense of affirmative action might carry conviction. This one helps me to conclude that the policy is probably, and rightly, done for. ♦

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Mr. Vistica's Navy

By Mark Helprin

Perhaps not coincidentally with the publication of Gregory L. Vistica's 447-page hatchet, *Fall From Glory: The Men Who Sank the U.S. Navy* (Simon and Schuster, $27.50), the ABC television program *Prime Time Live* addressed the world-shaking subject of sexual mores in the navy. Sam Donaldson, looking, as ever, as if he had just stepped from a Klingon battle cruiser, employed the magic of television to present admirals literally bowing their heads to confess—"I was insensitive"—as if in a Stalinist show trial.

If you wonder why the descendants of John Paul Jones and Oliver Hazard Perry did not tell whoever was bending them into soft pretzels of unctuous regret to go to hell, you might consider that admirals need things. They need carrier task forces, naval air stations, and zucchini-shaped underwater ships as big as the Seagram Building that can hide beneath the North Pole and turn Moscow into a glass paperweight as easily as Hillary Rodham Clinton can behead a travel office slave. You can't just make these; they require a massive societal effort sanctioned by a relatively fragile consensus all too easily disrupted with mass media opinions and accusations.

As much a master of unsupported (and, indeed, often unsupportable) opinions and accusations as Oliver Stone, Mr. Vistica (a *Newsweek* correspondent) has produced in book form an artifact of the television culture. He owes his outlook, his historiography, and his ethos not to Alfred Thayer Mahan and Samuel Eliot Morison but to Jerry Springer and Sally Jessy Raphael. Though I have read many a work on naval history and strategy, none has had quite as many references to breasts, balls, dildos, crotches, labia, nipples, penises, and pubic hair as this one.

But why should Mr. Vistica—"He reached over her shoulders with his arms and put his hands under her bra, squeezing her bare breasts"—refrain from using these tools to assess the navy when they have become the means by which the United States Senate probes the judicial philosophy of Supreme Court nominees? Especially when its prurience is by no means the chief failing of a work in which the ratio of static to substance is so high that a reviewer's responsibility to the reader becomes somewhat like that of a public health official who cordons off Ebola Fever sites.

An avid reader of footnotes may turn to Mr. Vistica's 40 pages of documentation to discover how he knows the not-particularly-honorable thoughts, feelings, motives, and intentions of a number of people he clearly does not like. Most of the time the reader will discover a citation that says only "Gordon interview" or "Pope interview." (Rest easy, not the pope himself.)

This is a work of broad accusation that employs no more scholarly apparatus than the citing of undetailed unquoted hearsay from bitter enemies in bureaucratic wars. Or, in other words: "'The road runner was carrying napalm and nuclear weapons when he came around the bend in the Arizona desert, heading rapidly toward the orphanage that he was secretly obsessed with destroying. All his life he had hated orphans, and this was his big chance. *He had to be stopped.*' See footnote 14. Footnote 14: Coyote interview."

Mr. Vistica quotes without quotation marks (Caspar Weinberger at the White House supposedly uttering the courtly phrase, *What the fuck are you doing here?*), pivots on antecedents so that the person quoted seems to be commenting on a specific formulation of which he may have no awareness, and attributes statements to people who clearly did not utter them. The following example involves former navy secretary John Lehman, the villain of the book. "What Lehman really wanted to do," Mr. Vistica writes, "was have them all shot or hung [sic]. And he had no bones about saying it publicly. He thought the sentence for treason should be like the ones given [sic] in the nineteenth century." Then, directing the reader, without a page reference, to Lehman's own book, Mr. Vistica supplies the following quotation: "That you . . . be hanged by the neck, but not until you are dead, but that you be taken down again, and whilst you are yet alive, your bowels be taken out and burnt before your face; and that afterwards your head be severed from your body and your body divided into four quarters."

Whereas Mr. Vistica's informants are "knowledgeable sources," those who provide information to his bête noire are "Lehman's spies, the Knights of Malta, and conservative Republicans." It might have been useful, by the way, had the Knights of Malta informed Mr. Vistica and his

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checkers that no matter how many times you call him Ike "Skeleton," the man in question is really Representative Ike Skelton. Mr. "Skeleton" is not identified as a Democrat, but merely as a member of Congress. So with most of Mr. Vistica's Democrats, but not his Republicans, who are branded and rated: as merely Republicans or as conservatives, staunch conservatives, or ultraconservatives.

The author's political bias is confirmed in this summation of the eighties: "The country's march toward militarism was so overwhelming that its foes in the establishment press and on Capitol Hill were helpless to stop it." But his politics are far overshadowed by his book's errors and internal contradictions; *Fall From Glory* is so riddled with illogic and inconsistencies that reading it is like watching ants on a burning log. For example, it is critical of the secretary of the navy because he "sought to bring the navy under civilian control." The Satanic Lehman "would bend and circumvent the rules if need be and use every political means available to become *the undisputed chief of the entire navy*" (emphasis mine). Dear God, civilian control of the military? What will the militarists think of next?

Kevin Chadwick

John Lehman

On the one hand, Mr. Vistica declares that "for twenty years the navy had misled Congress about the Soviet fleet," which, by his interpretation, was rusty, toothless, purely defensive, and hardly able to put to sea. But when it suits his convenience, he simply comes about. In a thrust against the aircraft carriers Lehman sought so tirelessly, he writes that the navy secretary "and his admirals kept secret the navy's intelligence reports that revealed the Soviets' probable weapons in a war against the carriers were nuclear. One of the primary vessels built expressly for this purpose was the Soviets' *Oscar*-class submarine, which could fire its twenty-four nuclear-tipped cruise missiles at a carrier from three hundred miles away." That the Soviets would use SSMs with nuclear warheads against carrier task forces was as much a secret as the fact that Paris is the capital of France, but what is remarkable about the statement is not its inaccuracy. What is remarkable, indeed extraordinary, is that its author maintains that the navy lied to Congress to portray the Soviet navy as strong, while simultaneously lying to Congress to portray the Soviet navy as weak. This school of thought, where you say whatever it takes to get you through, is what I call "The Tobacco Institute."

That he is not a master of consistency is clear, but what is his thesis? If one can navigate by his subtitle, he believes that the navy, which he graciously admits was not in tip-top shape when it was passed to a Republican administration, was "sunk" by the Republicans, particularly John Lehman. They simultaneously emasculated the admiralty while giving it what it wanted, and did so by colluding with the admirals in the big lie that the Soviet navy was worthy of counterbalance. But the Vistica operational definition of a navy that has been sunk seems almost in its entirety a portrait of the sea service in terms of its most eccentric and distasteful sexual mores.

His case against John Lehman is so vile, witless, obsessive, and exaggerated that it impeaches itself. A close reading of its 447 pages cannot fail to call forth parody:

> *Chunky raunchy Duke Buzutkis was sitting in his office chomping a five-foot-long celery stick that his mess steward had sculpted into the shape of a rhinoceros penis. A burly albino in his mid-fifties whose eyelids had been shot off during an unauthorized raid he led on Haiphong harbor at the behest of John Lehman, then an aide to Adolf Hitler, he had made admiral partly because the uncle of his husband's wife was on Kissinger's staff. Buzutkis wanted a 600-ship navy and would do anything to get it. If necessary, he told Skip Blutis, his Gypsy-American public affairs officer who had grown up in the Everglades and played water polo for the ultraconservative Hoover Institution, he would kill every man, woman, and child in the United States. He would murder his own family. He would war against God. He would even mislead Congress. The phone rang. It was John Lehman. The admiral's ship had come in.*

You didn't know that John Lehman was in charge of the nation as it marched overwhelmingly toward militarism in the Reagan years. He rolled right over the admirals, "manipulated" Secretary of Defense Weinberger, played the

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press like a piper, lied to Congress, and "manipulated" the president as well. And who was he? He was a man who, we are told, literally *almost* foamed at the mouth as he spoke in obscenities: "'What the fuck is going on? What in the hell are you doing?' John Lehman was almost foaming at the mouth, screaming into the telephone."

Stripped of sex, sensationalism, and long explorations attributable to lack of comprehension, Mr. Vistica's nearly one-half-thousand-page indictment would fit on the edge of a postcard. He believes the Soviet navy to have been so badly constructed and maintained that it was hardly operational. He believes that it was entirely defensive and that it was far smaller than anyone thought, because "a cabal of officers . . . for years had lied to Congress." He holds, therefore, that Lehman and his fellow champions of "Reagan's new militarism" aimed for a 600-ship U.S. Navy without any plausible justification other than making possible the so-called maritime strategy, which, in his view, "sent ships into Soviet waters looking to pick a fight."

While Soviet operational capabilities never lagged as far behind as Mr. Vistica suggests, they did not match those of Western navies. But they did not need to. The Soviet task was not to patrol the sea lanes but to close them, their operational pattern sudden bursts of activity rather than patiently standing the watch. In the decade before the American naval buildup, Soviet fleets proved time and again that they could swarm all over the world. In April 1975, for example, 220 Soviet vessels took part in "Exercise *Okean*," coordinating 10 days of intense activity in the Barents, Norwegian, and Mediterranean seas, the Sea of Japan, the Atlantic, and the Pacific. Beginning with the launch of a reconnaissance satellite and ending with a simulated strategic strike, this exercise apparently did not register on Mr. Vistica's scope.

By the same token, he is much exercised by Reagan-era naval excursions in the Black Sea, but has failed either to communicate or know about the previous decade's 20 Soviet naval task force cruises in the Caribbean. Not having done his homework, he says that Soviet "reconnaissance planes did not have the range to reach out and find an American battle group," but on October 10, 1977, two Soviet maritime patrol planes flew over the U.S.S. *Spruance* 300 miles from Boston, and two months later a similar incident occurred 150 miles east of Savannah.

His judgment that Soviet naval strategy was purely defensive is contradicted by the fact that the Soviets maintained a vast patrol submarine force for the aggressive purpose of closing North Atlantic sea lanes. He believes that the Soviets merely wanted to keep their missile submarines in a cold-water bastion to protect a second-strike potential, but dispersal into the open oceans affords a far more likely path to survival. All of which is to say nothing about surface deployments and the construction of facilities around the globe to support power projection—or the prospect of blocking Western power projection—in the Third World.

Mr. Vistica should be embarrassed by his claim that the navy "concealed the true story about the Soviet fleet and purposefully embellished its size," using a "grossly misleading figure of 1,700 for testimonies before Congress," which was "about three times the actual number." In fact, the International Institute for Strategic Studies's *1982-1983 Military Balance* lists 1,793 Soviet combatants, excluding supply ships, tenders, and auxiliaries.

The author has chosen to limit his interpretation of the Soviet fleet to major vessels only, while counting all types for the U.S. Navy. Without explanation he has simply excluded vast numbers of potent Soviet ships, like the 22 *Nanuchka* class corvettes in 1982, of which 31 exist at present. How convenient, for these are 200-ft.-long, long-range craft that can carry as many as 12 surface-to-surface missiles armed with nuclear warheads, a twin Mach 2.5 SAM launcher with 18 reloads, a 3″ gun that fires a 35 lb. high-explosive projectile 4.5 miles at 120 rounds per minute, a 3,000 round per minute 30-millimeter cannon accurate to 1.5 miles, and appropriate search radars, fire control, and countermeasures. The *Nanuchka*s pass the Dianne Feinstein test, which is to say they look absolutely deadly, and, for the sake of making an otherwise unsupportable argument, Mr. Vistica simply ignores them.

The author's main charge—that Lehman's management of the navy led it inexorably to the sexual malfeasance of the 1990s—is unquantified, purely anecdotal, repetitious, and immaterial. And it will sell books. In 1985, 750,000 sailors and marines were going about their business and doing their duty. Though Mr. Vistica has presented perhaps two dozen examples of abhorrent or criminal sexual behavior to make his case that the navy endured three consecutive Republican administrations only to flounder, it is probably a safe bet that the navy's record in this regard is better than that of a comparable sample of the general population.

The United States Navy is a huge organization built around several immense fleets. Its purpose is to maintain an almost invulnerable nuclear deterrent beneath the world's oceans, to keep the sea lanes open and clear in all circumstances, even and most importantly

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in war, to be able to project American military power into any corner within striking distance of the sea, and to ensure that it can do this by perpetually holding an edge in air, sea, and undersea combat. In addition, it gathers intelligence, sustains an amphibious army almost 200,000 strong, runs a large university system, does advanced research, and fights terrorists. Everything else is, at best, secondary, and sex is irrelevant.

This is what Gregory L. Vistica has failed to perceive. His book is faulted not merely by carelessness, inaccurate analysis, and patent bias, but, in the main, by his champion lack of perspective. Case dismissed. ♦

Books

The Tale of T.S. Eliot & Princess Di's Lawyer

By Frederic Raphael

Still in his thirties, Anthony Julius has an uneven fame in today's England: He is both the high-flying lawyer representing the Princess of Wales, in her impending divorce from Prince Charles, and the unadvertised author of a book, *T.S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and Literary Form*, which threatened enough of a storm to be greeted, in London literary circles, with conspicuous reticence.

Although published by the Cambridge University Press, it has not been reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement* or in most of the major British newspapers. Since Dr. Julius—his book is a revised, successful Ph.D. thesis—took two years out from his (as an anti-Semite, or a Jewish mother, might say) lucrative legal career in order to train for and acquire the intellectual muscle, and warrant, to get into the ring with Eliot, he can be excused for expecting at least a chorus of welcome obloquy after a Rocky-like rise from north-London obscurity to challenge the champion of High Culture.

By contrast, as Princess Diana's legal counsel, Julius has become a gossip-column celebrity, the minutiae of whose office politics merit newsprinted attention. We have been treated to headlined promises that his usual secretary at the firm of Mishcon, De Reya was miffed when he imported a different (more discreet?) typist to deal with palatial business, and it has been exclusively disclosed that some of his colleagues are detecting symptoms of hubristic vanity in his bearing. Like Eliot's Princess Volupine, Diana both lends kudos to her escort and excites envy in those whose arm, or advice, she disdains to take.

Perhaps the muted reception of Julius's book on Eliot proves only that enough is more than enough. After the play and film of *Tom and Viv*, with all their reheated simplifications, have we not had a surfeit of cattishness at the expense of the young(ish) Tom's flat-footed fogeydom? It may be true that he could neither satisfy his first wife—his long-lived second, Valerie, makes do with Keeper of the Flame self-satisfaction—nor obtain a pardon from a rabbinical court for his views on the Jewish question, but need we go on *and on* about his questionable shortcomings? He has achieved the usual English transition from *vieillard terrible* to cuddly cult-figure. His old publishing house, Faber and Faber, grows gorgeously rich not so much on his poetic reprints, however frequent, as on the royalties from *Cats* (based on *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, his volume of children's poetry). It is somewhat sweet that the prim author who referred so scathingly, and undoubtedly anti-Semitically, to "money in furs" should have been purringly immortalized by tuneful pussies. Does what is left of God sometimes take the form of a Cheshire cat, of whom there is nothing to be seen but an ironic smile?

If there have been murmurs of dismay at Julius's re-opening of the dated charges of anti-Semitism against Old Tom, critics have preferred to be sighingly sympathetic to the emotional—albeit anachronistic—reaction of a young, post-Holocaust Jew to the poet who declared, in the 1920 poem *Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar*, that "the rats are underneath the piles/the jew is underneath the lot." However, did not Théophile Gautier once say "*Tout passe*?" Is it not time everything did?

No: Anthony Julius has a new slant on the evidence.

For as long as anyone can remember, the standard response to Jews—and others, if any—who sought to evict Eliot from the sainted niche in which his merits, no less than his Anglophile assimilatory agility, installed him has been to deplore his persecutors' underdeveloped organs of appreciation. Sensitive critics like Christopher Ricks (assuming there is anyone

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like Christopher Ricks) have displayed, in detailed detail, with what straight-faced skittishness Eliot played the controversial polymath. By donning grotesque masks of unreason, of despair, and of mythological personae, was he not simply "doing the police," as he used to say, in a variety of cunningly subversive voices?

This routine defense insists that, like any other dramatist or dramatizer, Eliot cannot *legitimately* be identified with those whom he impersonates or whose platitudes he gilds, or makes glitter, with such scintillating derision. Julius treats these suave disclaimers with merciless courtesy; he does British justice to Eliot's professorial apologists by listening respectfully to them and believing no more than every other word they say. In this unusual fashion, he proves himself at times a greater, and always a more honest, admirer of Eliot than those who habitually plaster him with saintliness. The unintimidated Julius may attack the poet's anti-Semitism, but its nuanced malice does not prevent him from saluting its generative place in Old Possum's feline arsenal.

Julius's book is mold-breaking without being merely an act of debunking. Its diffident impact is only underlined by the affectations of *déjà vu* with which academics on both sides of the Atlantic have chosen, pretty well, to ignore it. Make no mistake: What is extremely rare, if not unique, is Julius's assertion that Eliot's dismissive disdain was not a dramatic device or even an ill-advised lapse on the great man's part, but an integral and seminal aspect of his imagination. He saw the Jews as a blot, not a menace; their physical stuntedness was the objective correlative of their spiritual atrophy. They were a practical joke he liked to crack, like a bad egg.

Julius rejects the fudgy dogma (so often propounded by John Carey, Christopher Ricks, and all that *galère*) that, since great poetry cannot be anti-Semitic and since Eliot certainly is a great poet, he cannot, logically, be hostile to Jews. Julius comes to the embarrassingly plausible conclusion that poems such as *Sweeney Among the Nightingales* are both great literature *and* anti-Semitic. Despite what Wittgenstein (or Jean-Paul Sartre) said to the contrary, aesthetics and ethics have no necessary equivalence or symmetry; there can, after all, be "good" reactionary literature. (Come to think of it, what would literature be without its prejudices, of which grammar is the abstract guardian? Mere naturalism!) With meticulously footnoted defiance, Julius breaches and honors the fastidious conventions of academic custom. His only naiveté is in supposing, if he does, that such candid duplicity can secure him the admiration more properly reserved, in literary critical circles, for hypocrisy.

It has always been held to be a sign of naiveté—an intellectual sin far graver than malice or vindictiveness—to attribute ideological content to poetry. Prose may incidentally embrace metaphors, but poetry *is* metaphor and hence *sui generis*: True or false assertions about the world can never properly be extracted from it. Julius cries "humbug" to this recension of the old claim to "benefit of clergy," and rightly. Yet like Eliot, he is at once subversive and respectful of tradition; *en bon anglais*, he is prudent enough to shout without raising his voice. His attack on literary evaluation is determined to be a contribution to it. Parody is the sincerest, and most painstaking, form of criticism.

I once said of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in reviewing a heavy volume of essays in which he took as much space to discuss the (negligible) role of the vice president of the United States as Thucydides did to describe the defeat of the Athenian armada in the great harbor of Syracuse during the Peloponnesian War, that there were "few dark corners on which he fails to shed fresh dust." If there is a trace of urgent dustiness in Julius, he differs from the smug junior Schlesinger (can anyone still take the toadying biographer of Robert Kennedy seriously?) in being genuinely enlightening. He is particularly forceful in exposing the supercilious stratagems with which Eng. lit. pundits have sought, systematically, to obscure or excuse the vulgar animus of protected specimens in the modern canon.

Although Ezra Pound's anti-Semitism is so manifest (and programmatically murderous) that only the most refined minds are scrupulous enough to deny its centrality in his work, one of Julius's problems is that for a Jew to harp on malice towards Jews can still be taken as evidence of undue sensitivity. Discreet Shylockian sufferance is much to be preferred to being a crybaby. I was once on a panel at Stratford, faced by rows of culture-tripping Japanese, after a production of *The Merchant of Venice* in which Shylock, played by Ian McDiarmid, wore a yellow hat, spoke with a stereotypical Jewy lisp, and played for self-inflicted laughs. In the discussion, McDiarmid denied angrily that he would ever have anything do with anything that endorsed anti-Semitism. To which, in my crowd-displeasing way, I asked whether this did not amount to resignation from Western European culture.

It is, I dare say, in response to such loutish cosmopolitan sarcasm that the critic Denis Donoghue impatiently advises Jews to have a sense of humor as willing to let bygones be bygones as that of his folk, the Irish. (None of them, we may deduce, has ever complained

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about such antique grievances as the behavior of Oliver Cromwell. And what Irishman would today remind the English of how little they did to alleviate the potato famine or draw attention to the cynicism with which London divided and still rules part of the Ireland it colonized?)

Before the war the English/Polish professor Sir Lewis Namier declined to write a history of his own people on the grounds that the Jews did not properly have a history, only a "martyrology." According to Julius's reading, Eliot's *A Song for Simeon* (1928) testifies to even the most honorable Jew's marginal role by Simeon's greeting the arrival of Jesus merely as a resigned, soon-to-be-dispossessed witness (witness is, of course, the root meaning of "martyr"). St. Paul's "New Covenant" relegated the Chosen People to the exemplary position of rejected wanderers (Blaise Pascal took the same view of them in the 17th century); they have been forced to pay the long price of their refusal to believe in Christ ever since.

The caesura between B.C. and A.D. was indeed fatal for Jewish fortunes. At their peak, in the early Roman empire, Jews constituted 10 percent of the population of the known world; their diabolization by the Fathers of the Church (St. John Chrysostom, the "golden-mouthed," led the way) reveals the fabricated cohesion of the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition. In fact, the rupture between Jews and Christians was as dire for the former as it was promotional to the latter. The Judeo/Christian tradition is a long story of one-sided malevolence; to justify their malice, Christians discovered regular "evidence" of what the usual suspects were up to. Ritual murder, poisoned wells, and lamentable standards of personal hygiene were the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual gracelessness. (Muslims, on the other hand, were ridiculed for excessive washing; good Christians, inspired perhaps by St. Francis's charitable attitude to infestation, did not have to indulge in bathing more than once a year.)

Chas Fagan

T.S. Eliot

In his many studies of the relation between violence and religion, René Girard has pointed out that "the scapegoat mechanism," which stigmatizes the outcast (and preferably weak) Other, is a standard recipe when a society feels in danger of fracture or disintegration; victimizers have to see themselves as victims. One of the curious and unforeseen consequences of expelling or killing scapegoats is that they later become objects of superstitious veneration. Supernatural and magic powers are attributed to the bloody nuisance whose maltreatment has enabled society to recover its poise. Jesus remarked that the stone that the builder rejected became the head of the corner. The Jew becomes an unexpected instance of the same process; time and again, he is dismissed from Christian society, only subsequently to be credited (though not by Mr. Eliot) with the mythical, tentacular omnipotence which sponsors rekindling the fuse of violence. Not wholly by chance was the religious scholar Mircea Eliade both the academic apostle of the theory of eternal return *and* a committed Fascist.

David Pryce-Jones, the present-day historian of anti-Semitism, once told me that on the eve of his execution, Julius Streicher, the Nazi "Jew-baiter," informed his jailers that he now realized that he had been completely wrong about the Jews. On being told that it was a little late for repentance, Streicher explained that he had not exaggerated the worldly power of the Jews, but rather underestimated it: Since they were clearly invincible, he now wanted to be on their side. If they had survived the Holocaust, they were a club worth joining.

In more refined calculations, however, the sorry survival of the Jews is coincidental with, and a validation of, the history of Christianity. Hence the humbug of the postwar Eliot's "refutation" of charges of anti-Semitism by asserting that, since he was a Christian, he could not possibly be anti-Semitic. Even

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if it was technically a "sin" to hate Jews (or anyone else), such sinfulness was scarcely a practical impossibility; sins have, after all, been known to be committed. Be that as it may, Eliot became quite tetchy, after 1945, when "libeled" by uncouth contributors to the *Times Literary Supplement*; he demanded "evidence" or retraction, quite as if he had never printed the propositional, prosaic remarks in *After Strange Gods* calling for a very limited number of "free-thinking Jews" in any putative Christian society. His ideal state would require the exclusion of Jews who tried to pass for common citizens (Maurras too was particularly venomous about those who changed their names). Father Coughlin and Ole Ez and the Great Tom were brothers under the skin. The Rev. Farrakhan is but the latest witless recruit to their fraternity.

In his 1970 T.S. Eliot Memorial Lecture, George Steiner mimicked the *arriviste*'s cautious nerve when he alluded to Eliot's mutedly regretful references to the recent Holocaust in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (still awaiting Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical version). Steiner has claimed that his polemic wariness contributed to the frustration he encountered when seeking preferment in Oxford or Cambridge. In the printed lectures, entitled *In Bluebeard's Castle*, probably his best and certainly his most cogently argued work, Steiner delicately broke academic step by dealing openly with Eliot's reluctant retreat from the quasi-Fascist ideology with which he had certainly flirted in the *entre deux guerres*. At that time, Eliot all but got into bed, in a spiritual sense, with Charles Maurras, whose *Action Française* movement was avowedly based on anti-Semitism. In 1940, Maurras notoriously remarked that France's defeat was "a divine surprise," and in 1945 he observed unrepentantly that his condemnation by a French court was "the revenge of Dreyfus." What we shall never know, luckily for us and, I suspect, for his reputation, is what posture Eliot would have struck in a London as providentially subject to the Nazis as occupied France was.

I have suggested elsewhere that there is something no less providential, in an amiable but not wholly dissimilar sense, in the creation of the European Community. The vanished Jews of Europe provide an unspoken but fundamental reason for the kind of "fresh beginning" that will consign them to honorable oblivion. By "fundamental" I mean that the blood of Europe's Jews has provided the basic cement linking their active and passive persecutors in a pact of righteous silence. Why else was the recent suggestion by President Clinton that dispossessed European Jews should be allowed to sue, independently or as members of a "community," for the return of their stolen property greeted as another example of clod-hopping Yankee crassness? Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's prophylactic payment of "compensation" to the nascent state of Israel was both a confession of guilt and a well-timed act of early redemption (buying back) of Germany's good name: *Mea culpa* and *raison d'état* went together economically.

The place of the Jews today, even in the demonology of their enemies, has changed beyond foreseeable regression since the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel. There are those, of whom George Steiner is the most rampantly outspoken, who wonder whether Hitler was not, in some sense, the unacknowledged sponsor, even the necessary cause, of the Jewish state and whether the Jews are not fated to disappear, as "the people of the book," as much because of Zionism as because of the Holocaust. Having acquired a land, Steiner laments, they are no longer rooted in the text, in the intellect, in what D.H. Lawrence called "disinterested speculation." Anti-Semitism certainly did not die with Hitler, but his murderous example rendered it obscene as a philosophy or, except to crackpots and headline-hoggers, as an explanation of "the way we live now" (to cite the title of Trollope's novelistic contribution to the anti-Semitic canon). Winston Churchill once told one of Hitler's legmen to advise his master that anti-Semitism was a "good starter but a bad stayer," and so it seems, bloodily, to have proved.

In the light of 20th-century experience, it should be strange that, of all our strange gods, the anti-Semitic figures in the literary pantheon have retained their centrality. Myths of Jewish cunning and clannish manipulation could hardly survive the Holocaust any better than the benign God Whom, supposedly, Jew and Christian had in common. Not the least intriguing of recent discoveries—published in France—is that of a suppressed papal encyclical, commissioned by Pius XI in 1938, in which a Jesuit and a Dominican, among others, argued for an unequivocal condemnation of anti-Semitism and racism. Pius XI died before he could sign the *imprimatur* and Pius XII had it shelved. This palpable cowardice has not been held against him by those who maintain that he "saved" many thousands of Jews by his tacit tact. Eliot's obsequious postwar decorum was of a piece with Pius XII's concern more with Christian continuity than with Christian witness.

What mattered in 1945 was the preservation of appearances; a complete rejection of what had led up to the *Shoah* would have been tantamount to a repudiation of the whole language of Western thought. It was literally unthink-

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able. The preservation of Eliot, as the head of the corner, was the academy's compact with prudent oblivion.

Am I saying that he was not a great poet? Must I? I prefer to remember what a French academician wrote not long ago: As a young *lycéen*, he was an impotent witness of the arrest of the Jewish members of his class. He became an influential critic and made a considerable career in literature, but he was, he confessed, never able to think that writing was quite as supremely important as cultural pundits would have us believe. Somerset Maugham remarked long ago, when someone accused a (fictional) character of being a lousy poet because he behaved despicably, that he was, on the contrary, a great poet; he was a lousy *man*—Mr. Eliot, intimidating impostor, probing *poseur* and genius, was of the same *galère*.

The comedy of his intrusive centrality is that the man from St. Louis was himself, in Maurras's terms, a *métèque*—a camouflaged foreigner in an England where anti-Semitism was, and perhaps is, often a casual social prejudice but never a plausible political program. England's refusal to be scandalized by Anthony Julius's book is not itself a scandal. The Jews have had a happy history in Britain, despite flurries of malice and, sometimes, of murder. Benjamin Disraeli (a convert, though proud of his Jewish blood) is the only Victorian figure who is still instantly recognized by his nickname, Dizzy. And the most famous English Jews, despite the malpractice of those like Robert Maxwell, are remembered for their benefactions and their genius rather than for their misdeeds.

English tolerance may be almost indistinguishable from indifference, but is London wholly misguided in being more interested in Anthony Julius as Princess Di's worthy liegeman than in Dr. Julius, the shedder of indignant dust? ♦

Movies

Cross-Dress for Success

By John Podhoretz

The Birdcage is about a drag queen who hardly ever dresses in drag, believes in family values, and never touches his live-in lover of 20-plus years. These plot points are essential to the movie's commercial prospects; indeed, *The Birdcage* is going to make a lot of money because of its boundless hypocrisy. It preaches tolerance while having a good laugh at the expense of two mincing, shrieking, weeping male caricatures of women. It preaches understanding but refuses to show us any questionable sexual or physical behavior that might make understanding a bit more difficult. The only consistent target of its animus is a politically conservative U.S. senator who is co-founder of a group called Coalition for Moral Order. It's acceptable to dress up in women's clothes and have pornographic statuary around your house, director Mike Nichols and screenwriter Elaine May are telling us; it's quite another thing to oppose abortion and think women should stay at home with their children. Tolerance apparently has its limits.

Its most telling moment comes at the film's climax, when the senator discovers that the matronly, ferociously right-wing housewife to whom he feels a strange attraction is actually a man in a dress. The two of them have just completed a long conversation over dinner about abortion during which the drag queen wonders why pro-lifers want to kill abortion doctors: "I say kill the mothers. After all, the fetus is going to get it either way, so why not go down with the ship!"

"They don't make women like that anymore," says the love-smitten senator, and so finds himself speechless when the drag queen removes his wig to reveal the middle-aged homosexual underneath.

The Birdcage: *Another hypocritical Hollywood boy story*

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And then the drag queen speaks a line that ought to be another joke. "Senator," he says, "I meant what I said about family values and the need for a return to morality."

But it's not a joke; Nichols and May mean us to take the drag queen seriously. And so we see American liberalism at low ebb not only in the White House but at our multiplex—so bereft of conviction that it can only try to steal the ideas and terminology of its ideological enemies on the right while seeking to congratulate itself for its courage and openness.

It's a gambit as clever as the one Bill Clinton has been playing these past few months, and Nichols and May follow theirs to its logical conclusion. Though the movie is a slavishly faithful remake of the 1977 French hit *La Cage aux Folles*, still the most popular foreign-language film ever shown in the United States, its tone is entirely different. *La Cage* is what they used to call a "saucy Gallic romp," a door-slamming farce that celebrates the sybaritic life; its drag queen dresses in women's clothing even when off stage. *The Birdcage* is so intent on sanitizing the gay life its drag queen wears weird leisure suits straight out of the 1970s unless he is on stage performing in a Miami revue.

The difference between the two films is telling. These days Hollywood builds movies the way political campaigns build support—by trying to figure out how to appeal to the widest number of people while simultaneously sending knowing winks to core supporters. *The Birdcage* allows the unenlightened to scream with laughter at the outrageous behavior of the drag queen and his equally fey maid (Nathan Lane and Hank Azaria, respectively, who are, it must be said, hilarious), while bowing to 1990s convention by having the tiresome Robin Williams spout liberation-speak every few minutes ("I spent 20 years becoming who I am and I know who I am and I don't need to be anything other than who I am" etc. etc.).

American moviegoers show no sign that they feel natural sympathy for a man compelled by a misconceived sense of self to make himself appear to be a woman; indeed, last summer's drag comedy, *To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything, Julie Newmar!*, died at the box office due to the anxiety such a freakshow sight inspires in audiences.

Nichols and May answer it by making their drag queen an unclosseted version of the closet case Felix Unger, played by Tony Randall on the 1970s television rendition of Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple*. "I don't have to be reasonable," Randall's Unger liked to say. "I'm a CRAZY PERSON!" So, too, with Nathan Lane's Albert; he's a delightful nut-case and a star to boot, so what can you do with such a man? Love him, only love him, the movie says, even though five minutes in the real-life company of such a person would send any rational soul screaming for the exits.

The movie's message is that we can all just get along if we appreciate and accept each other (unless we're right-wing, but then another drag queen informs us that "Bob Dole is just gorgeous"). And it concludes with a wedding that inadvertently reveals the lie behind this straight-outta-Hallmark philosophy. Robin Williams's son, conceived during a one-night stand 20 years ago, is marrying the senator's daughter. He is Jewish, she Episcopalian. And so, in the sight of the entire congregation, they are married by a priest and a rabbi, an explicit parallel to the marriage the movie makes between the world of gays and the world of straights.

Yes. Well. Straight and gay, Jew and Gentile, we can all intermix and intermingle. But, you see, Jews aren't supposed to marry Gentiles. That's what the Bible says. (It says some stuff about homosexuality too.) ♦

Music

A Jewel Beyond Price

By Jay Nordlinger

When I was a teenager and vulnerable to fashion, I was much taken with Bertolt Brecht's acid observation that those who desire heroes are saps. Now that I have put off childish things, I see Brecht for what he was, and that heroes, like ideals, have their place. In my boyhood, there were many heroes, but two who towered. One was Mickey Lolich, the portly pitcher for the Detroit Tigers. I don't think of the Mick much anymore; he went on to run a doughnut shop north of the city. The other was Leontyne Price, the soprano. I think about her a lot, and the other week I heard my eighth Price recital.

These recitals have made for 16 or so well-spent hours, and anyone who has attended just one of them can say why. First, there is the voice, a mysterious instrument about which rivers of ink have been spilled for almost five decades. And second, there is the woman herself, whose character seems inseparable

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from her musicianship. It is often said that a recital with her is a religious experience. That this is often said—a hackneyed belief—makes it no less true. A Price recital is a strange mixture of prima-donna-fest and church service, with no small amount of personal idolatry thrown in. And in an age that prizes unpredictability and change, they are always, dependably, the same, these recitals.

She enters ready for business—all gown and smile and diva regality—and feigns astonishment at the frenzied adulation of the audience. Then she opens the program with something Baroque (normally Handel or Bach). Following is a Mozart aria, cleanly Classical and daringly uncovered. Next comes the *lieder* set—some combination of Joseph Marx, Hugo Wolf, and Richard Strauss. ("As someone remarked to Schubert, 'Take me to your *lieder*,'" Tom Lehrer once quipped.) The first half closes with a blockbuster Italian aria. This may well be Verdi's "Pace, Pace" from *La Forza del Destino*, whose concluding maledictions—ferociously hurled by one of history's most convincing Leonoras—leave the fans numb and amazed as they head for the lobby.

She returns, to even more ecstatic applause, for a French set: Fauré, Poulenc, conservatory chestnuts like "Chère nuit," all delivered with unmannered refinement and Gallic cool. Then you have the American group, in which she honors and gives a leg up to her friends: Samuel Barber (no longer in need of promotion), Ned Rorem (ditto—he does enough of it himself), Lee Hoiby, Margaret Bonds, and others. She ends the printed program with two spirituals. The second is almost always "Ride On, King Jesus." The first may be "Witness," "My Soul is Anchored in the Lord," or "Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit." (Once when she was singing this latter, I could have sworn she looked dead into my eyes on the line, "Now, come on, sinner: Don't you be late.")

The encores are plentiful: Puccini's "Vissi d'arte" from *Tosca*, "Tu? Tu? Piccolo iddio" from *Madama Butterfly* (complete with simulated knife-plunge), and "Chi il bel sogno" from *La Rondine* (showing off on Cs, even at this hour). There is Gershwin's "Summertime" (*Porgy and Bess*); the spiritual "This Little Light o' Mine" (which she announces was her mother's favorite); and Cilea's "Io son l'umile ancella" from *Adriana Lecouvreur* (whose final A-flat can be floated forever, even as you start back to the wings with a little valedictory wave of the hand).

It does not alter, and that is the glory of it. The buyer knows what he is getting, and the seller never disappoints. There is such a thing as a performing genius—different from a creative genius—and Price clearly is one.

What she has, Kreisler and Beecham and Rubinstein had. It cannot be taught, cannot be earned, can only be saluted when on display. Price is every inch the opera star (and why shouldn't she be, given that she has caused all of the fabled houses to kneel at her feet?). But she appears genuinely humble and grateful, and when she says, as she does, "I love you," it is not in the air-kissy manner of the socialite, but with the sincerity of the devout and serene.

One wonders, fretfully, how long she will go on. She is only two years younger than Bob Dole, and you are not supposed to be able to sing for as long as you can run for president. Recordings will explain only part of the phenomenon to grandchildren. Everyone disdains the bore who says, "You had to have heard so-and-so in the flesh, because the recordings simply don't do him justice," but in Price's case, it is so.

Leontyne Price

Chas Fagan

I said earlier that, in rejecting Brechtian cynicism, I had put off childish things. But actually, an appreciation of heroes is more like a return to the pure and honest beliefs of a child. And Leontyne Price, against the leveling tendencies of an unheroic age, is a giant. Mickey Lolich? He wasn't bad, either. ♦

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BOB DOLE'S Gettysburg Address

Fourscore and seven years ago — that's 87 years the way Bob Dole was taught math back in Russell, Kansas, where we didn't have lots of fancy equipment, fancy computers and such. Anyway, fourscore and 87 years back then, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. I can be Thomas Jefferson, if that's what you want me to be. Men equal — and women too. That's what this graveyard is all about.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure, or at least until the May recess. We are met on a great battlefield of that war (not that Pat Buchanan ever stepped on a battlefield). We have come to dedicate a portion of that field — by the way, we're calling it Arlen Specter Field, in honor of the great Senator from this great state who ran a tough race for President — as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this, especially since I'm pretty sure we have the votes.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow — lotta five-dollar words in this speech — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract, which brings up school choice, which I'm for, because our children are what this war is all about. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. So let me just say, thank you, Gettysburg! It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced, especially a balanced budget and intercoastal waterway reform. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us; that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God — see, Ralph, got God in there — shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people . . . You know, that's from the Constitution, and I have in my pocket something also from the Constitution, it's 28 words, you oughta read it, the 10th amendment . . . shall not perish from the earth.

Or whatever.

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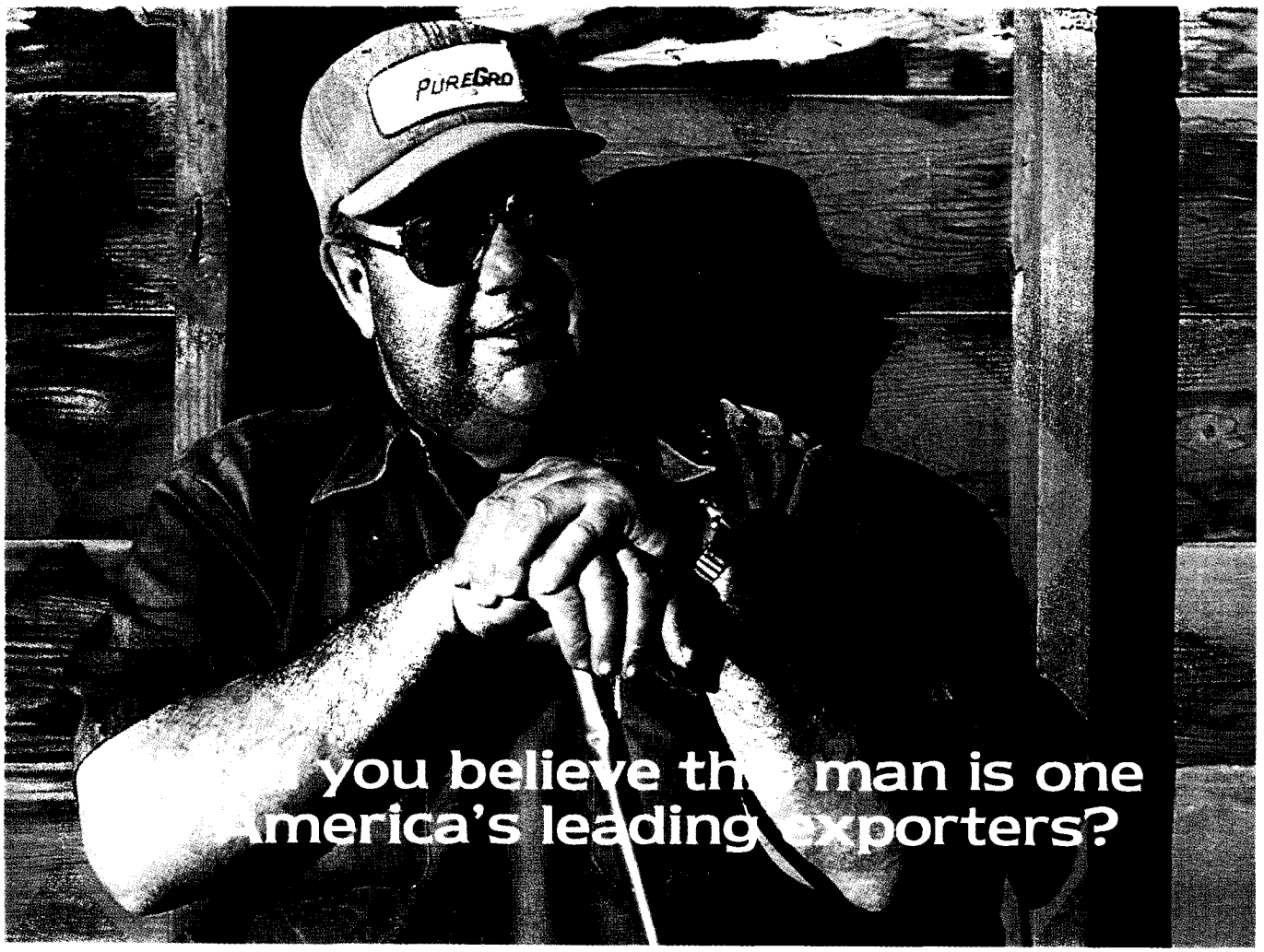
food for thought



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